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Mountain Cattle

BOOKS BY MARY KIDDER RAK

A COWMAN'S WIFE
MOUNTAIN CATTLE

MOUNTAIN CATTLE

MARY KIDDER RAK

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES OWENS



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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
THEO HAMPE

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Mountain Cattle



I. APACHE PEAK

WE dismounted on the crest of Apache Peak, secured the packets of lunch which had been fastened to our saddles, and left Charlie's big blue-roan horse and my small dun mule in stirrup-high grass, their bridle reins dragging, to tie them to the ground.

Although the faint breeze that stirred the grass was blowing from the south, there was a distinct tang of October in the air, and the sunbaked boulders by which we sat radiated a pleasant warmth. We were not far from home. Indeed, we were at home, looking down almost two thousand feet from the height to which we had climbed by means of a gently ascending trail made by our cows, who are Nature's engineers. Before us was spread the whole panorama of our domain, Old Camp Rucker Ranch. A ring of lofty, wooded mountains formed the great bowl which is Rucker Basin. Between the peaks were folded the canyons, down which

streams descended to fill the river that flows through the one narrow opening in the Basin's rim. Green mesas were dotted by grazing cattle. The winding course of Whitewater, limpid and sparkling above the white rocks of its bed, was outlined by the leaning sycamores that lined the river-bank. Although we have had no frost, the leaves of the sycamores have turned yellow, and we looked down upon a ribbon of gold, against the dense, dark green of pine, oak, and juniper.

A patch of scarlet sumac lay in the mouth of Devil's Canyon. The pale green of quaking aspen flowed down the side of Sunset Peak — the mountain that still flaunts a crimson crest when all her sisters are clothed in the somber violets and blues of twilight.

Along the river lay our hayfields, their stubble still green, although the sweetly scented hay is cured and lies in the barns. A gray roof, half-hidden by trees, shelters our home. Half a century earlier, Chiricahua Apache warriors crouched by the same boulders against which we now leaned: watching the soldiers of Old Fort Rucker; counting their number as they drilled on the parade ground; signaling in day by smoke and by fire at night, to give warning of the movements of the cavalry. While from Heliograph Hill, across the canyon, blue-coated soldiers flashed their messages to other army posts.

At our feet lay three dogs, lolling in a bed of matted grass on which they had thrown themselves, panting. Although their whole attention was seemingly upon the distant river, which was the nearest place in which they could find a drink, they sat up and regarded us with interest the moment we stopped eating. They drew near and sat on their haunches in a semicircle, facing us, while their master carefully divided the last sandwich into three generous bites.

Handsome Robles, the sedate and gentle father-dog, is always given the first piece. He opened a cavernous, red mouth and caught the tidbit, smacking his lips loudly to show

his appreciation. Scooter, the elder son, sadly mongrel, looked at my husband expectantly, his brown eye kindly, his 'chalk-eye' baleful, and caught his piece expertly. The younger son of Robles, Negrito, small, waggy-tailed, and black, awaited his turn with entire assurance, for never in his life has he failed to receive his proper share. Now and then we still divide our bread in four parts. It is so hard for us to realize that Foxy, the dear, three-legged mother-dog, is lying in her tiny grave. It is near our door, so she may not feel too lonely.

'The cattle are going down to water,' said Charlie, rising. 'We'd better be going too.'

He tightened the cinches of my saddle before we mounted, lest I suddenly find myself draped around the mule's neck as we rode down the trail. Charlie was riding Art, a big, round-barreled horse, well able to carry a six-foot man and a heavy stock-saddle. My Tobe is an agile (sometimes too agile) mule that I like to ride when we are making a steep climb or are scrambling among the outcropping ledges that overhang the deep ravines.

'A mule will never commit suicide,' says my husband.

As long as Tobe's long, eloquent ears wag nonchalantly, the going is good. When they stiffen, draw close together and point forward, I know Tobe feels that we are in a bad spot and I slacken the rein to give him every chance to find his own way out of it.

We mounted and rode around the crest of the mountain to make sure that all of the cattle which graze there had taken the trail that leads to water. There was no need to follow them down at breakneck pace. On the Round Flat near the river, an open glade framed by spreading wild-walnut trees, there are blocks of salt, and there the cattle usually linger after watering; climbing back to their lofty pasture and bed-grounds in the late afternoon.

The fall branding is almost over. Here and there in the more inaccessible parts of our rough wooded range, there may lurk a few calves which were missed, and the hope of finding some of these 'slick-ears' had taken us to Apache Peak. After helping us with the branding, Dolores, the Yaquicito (little Yaqui), had departed, unmourned. We knew when we hired him that he would not stay. He never stays anywhere; but he is a good worker as long as he lasts, and there are a number of ranches in this southeastern corner of Arizona upon which he works on and off — mostly off.

We followed the cattle down the mountain-side, rejoicing in their sleekness. They are fat, and their calves are lusty and frolicsome after a summer rich in grass, when clouds formed so swiftly that we happily said, 'It rains out of a clear sky.' At the foot of the winding trail we halted to call the dogs, who had been scampering about just as they pleased; barking; chasing foxes and squirrels; digging furiously in rabbit burrows.

'All the dogs behind now!' warned their master. 'We are going to work cattle.'

We separated and came out on the glade from opposite sides, riding slowly, singing the soft, meaningless 'Coo-oo! Coo-oo!' that seems to quiet and reassure the cattle. Upon one of the cows on the glade our musical efforts seemed to have the opposite effect. She leaped to her feet, raised her head high and looked at us fixedly; hostile, wary. The unbranded calf by her side was equally distrustful and was evidently ready to take after his mother at top speed if she decided to bolt for the woods. Among the placid, white-faced cattle, all natural muleys or dehorned, this wild-natured, mottle-faced, horned animal looked like the survival that she was. Piasa we called her, outlaw daughter of a demon-cow named Old Funny Face, who was caught and sold some time ago when we were clearing the range of the last cows of

mixed breed. We should have sold Piasa too had we been able to catch her. Never before have we found her outside of Brushy Canyon, where she always managed to escape us by dodging into dense thickets through which no horse could follow her. Charlie roped her one day when he found her in an open spot; tied her down and branded her with the cinch-ring that he carries on his saddle. It was great luck to find her now so far from her own familiar 'briar patch.'

With great caution we rode around the cattle and started them in the direction of the home corrals, which were only half a mile up the canyon. We regretted Dolores as the lead cattle took the trail at a brisk pace. On one side of the trail lay the river, and that is the one on which I usually ride, since it offers the best chance to head off a cow that is trying to get away. This time I left it to Charlie Rak, because of Tobe's well-known aversion to water. He is eager to pursue a cow up hill and down dale, lickety-split — until she crosses a stream. Whether the water is a foot deep or an inch, he stops short before it, ears forward, forefeet planted on the brink. Eventually he makes up his mind to take the plunge, but by that time the cow has vanished.

Art is quite willing to swim if necessary and Tobe is very good at sliding in and out of thickets and scrambling over rocks, so we brought home the cattle without too much trouble. We drove them past the ruined adobe walls of Old Fort Rucker and the long, low, pine-log barn that was once a barrack. At last they were safely within the immense round corral, built of juniper pickets on the site of the old one in which the cavalry horses were picketed, fed, and saddled. Adjoining this large corral are a series of smaller corrals, equally stout and high, and into one of these we 'cut' the unbranded calf and his 'snaky' mother. Art and Tobe were now led into the barn where they could munch hay, since we could work more easily on foot in the small space.

In one corner of the small corral huddled Piasa and her son, watching our every movement. In another corner were the blackened stones and charred wood left from many a branding fire. On nearby pickets hung a row of running-irons, long, straight shafts ending in a crook, with which an expert cowboy can make any brand ever burned on a calf. With his big jack-knife, Charlie whittled a piece of juniper into fine shavings to kindle the fire. Over these were arranged sticks of seasoned oak in crisscross layers, and when the fire blazed, he put the irons on to heat and whetted his longest knife-blade against his bootleg to have a keen edge for the ear-marking.

The irons were hot. From the barn Charlie fetched his new stout riata, made of plaited rawhide. (I have tied his old one to my saddle merely out of swank, never having been able to catch anything with it.) He made a loop, swung it about his head, and it flew from his hand to grab Piasa's astonished calf by both hind legs. It looked so easy. I don't see why I can't do it.

In the center of the corral is a big juniper snubbing post, worn smooth by circling ropes. I stood by it, watching Charlie as he threw the calf, jerked his rawhide pigging-string from his belt, and bunched the calf's legs together to tie them. Just outside the corral crouched the three watchful dogs, their noses thrust under the gate. They associate a branding-fire with delectable bits of calf's ear, and, though they are not allowed to come into the corral while the roping is going on, they are ready for a dash at the first possible moment.

‘Crash!’

The snubbing-post at my side quivered, and Piasa recoiled from the impact, backed off, snorted, and pawed the ground. She had tried to knock me over and her head had met the post behind which I stood.

‘Charlie! I’m scared!’ I shrieked.

‘Stay where you are!’ yelled my husband.

Piasa was on her way again, head down.

‘Crash!’

Her sharp horns gleamed wickedly on each side of the post. It was so long since I had seen a cow ‘on the prod’ that I had thought I was no longer afraid of cattle, but the first bang of Piasa’s head on the post had jolted me out of my complacency.

‘Charlie! I’m scared!’

‘Stay where you are!’

Piasa’s calf was fighting, too, thrashing around on the ground, four feet lashing out viciously. Until he had it tied, Charlie could not rescue me, and he knew that I was perfectly safe if only I kept my head and my snubbing-post.

‘Bla-la-la-la-la-la-la!’ bellowed the infuriated Piasa, backing off to shake her sore head before charging a third time.

‘Charlie! I’m scared!’ I was striking a higher note with each scream.

‘Stay where you are!’ His *basso* was growing more *pro-fundo*.

‘Bow-wow! Yip! Yip! Grrrrr! Bow-wow!’

A chorus of dogs surged in under the gate.

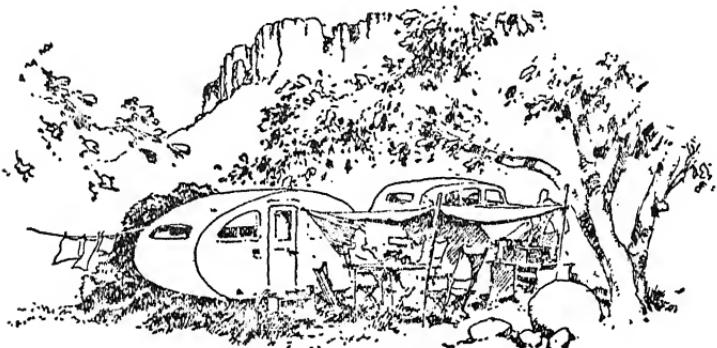
Piasa whirled around, charged them and they surged out again, but they had given us the moment’s respite that we needed. I dashed out through another gate and closed it after me. Charlie finished tying the calf and was ready for Piasa when she turned her wrath upon him. He threw open the gate to the big corral, where the gentle cattle waited patiently, and Piasa bolted through it, fleeing before the terror of his swinging, hissing rope.

The calf was branded. We turned out the cattle, unsaddled Tobe and Art, and opened the gate to their pasture. It was dusk. With a thrashing of wings and querulous cries, the turkeys were settling themselves for the night on the dead

branches of a cottonwood tree, where they were silhouetted against the pale gray sky. The one splash of color in the shadowy corral was the bed of coals still glowing in the corner. Charlie came back from the well with a bucketful of water and poured it on the fire. The coals hissed and a white cloud of steam rose and vanished like a ghost.

Robles thrust his cold nose into my hand pleadingly.

‘Come on! It’s time for supper, and we’ve all earned it.’



II. THE CAMPERS

EARLY the next morning we were again in the saddle. Every other day Art and Tobe take their ease in the pasture, while we must content ourselves with a night's rest. Eagle, a beautiful, white, Spanish cowpony, is Charlie's alternate mount at present, and the little *Æohippus* is mine. He is a stalky, short-legged, red-roan, who uses his brains to save his heels. When we are working cattle, he is alert to forestall the movements of the cows and seemingly has for his motto, 'A step in time saves nine.'

On the lower part of our range are cattle which we wish to drive up to the higher pastures where they are to winter, and each day we have been rounding up these in small bunches and driving them toward the mountains. Gates are closed behind them so that they cannot return to their old haunts. In each canyon in Rucker Basin a double corral has been built of juniper pickets, in which we may doctor and brand the cattle without driving them all the way home and back again. When we arrived at the corrals in Cottonwood with

our little bunch of cattle, we found there several cows and calves, licking salt. Among them was one slick-eared heifer, and Charlie branded her with the running-irons that hang on the pickets ready for use.

In a roundabout way we rode home, turning aside to look closely at every animal we saw on an open hillside; following the sound of every cowbell that came from a thicket. The sun was far in the west when we reached the floor of the Main Canyon and rode through the gate before the large adobe house known as the Hermitage. The land on which it stands now belongs to us, as does that of another old dwelling which we call the *Casa Escondida*, the Hidden House. We have always regretted that these houses are too far from our own to serve as extra quarters for guests or workers.

Several years before we came here to live, all the land in this vicinity which was suitable for settlement had been taken up. Much of it had already been sold to those cattle-men who remained here throughout the influx of 'nesters.' The patented land in Rucker Basin, originally comprising four homesteads, now belongs to us, and the remaining land within the Forest, rocky, wooded, and sterile, has long been withdrawn from entry by the Government.

From ranchers whose experience long antedates my own, I have heard of the days when a wave of homesteaders flowed across a country hitherto devoted to grazing. Cattlemen rode forth to find here and there, in the choicest spots of their range, covered wagons, full of women and tow-headed children; hobbled horses; hounds; chickens; and men who were beginning to build on land on which they were planning to make their home.

Except for Sunday picnickers or hunters encamped for the night, we are unused to seeing others domiciled on our own range. It startled us to ride through the trees on our way home and find an elaborate camp established on a glade that

slopes gently to the river. A gleaming car and smartly painted trailer were parked where the covered wagon of an earlier day might have come to rest. Two immaculate white tents were pegged down beneath a vineclad oak. Two men and two women, comfortably seated in canvas chairs beneath a striped awning, contemplated us with the ease of those who are at home under their own vine and oak tree.

Robles, who is the friend of all the world, trotted up to the camp at once. The other dogs remained at our heels: Negrito through timidity, and Scooter because his habitual attitude is that of the Cockney, "E's a strainger. 'Eave 'arf a brick at 'im!"

We called to Robles, bowed to the campers, who were petting him, and rode on toward home.

"They are pleasant, intelligent-looking people," I commented when we were beyond hearing.

"If they have sense enough to shut the gates when they have gone through, that's all I ask," was Charlie's morose response.

Before we finished unsaddling our horses, Santiago García and Alcario Rincon came into the corral to speak to us, having arrived during our absence.

Santiago is a tall, incredibly lean Indian of indeterminate age, who has been in these mountains so long, earning a living with his axe and his burros, that no one remembers when he first came to the Chiricahuas. For several years he has been working for us under contract, building fences, making fence-posts, cutting cordwood and packing it. He had become such a fixture that my husband built a one-room cabin for him near the house occupied by our vaquero. There he lives alone in peace and apparent contentment; his only housemate a fat, spotted, mongrel hound named Pinto, whom our dogs loathe because Pinto howls instead of barking.

Santiago has a philosophy of life that is just the opposite of

that of most of his fellow Mexicans. They like to work '*poco poco*,' a little each day, enjoying a leisurely existence. Santiago likes to labor incessantly at a job until he has finished it. Then he draws his pay and goes off in his rattle-trap of a car to enjoy himself until the money is gone. Since he works by contract and never leaves a job unfinished, we do not interfere with his chosen mode of life.

Santiago's companion, Alcario Rincon, is an alert, sturdy, good-looking Mexican cowboy, who has an excellent opinion of himself.

'I drove out here with Santiago,' began Alcario confidently, 'because he told me that you need a vaquero.'

It was evident that he had expected us to be overjoyed at the prospect of his services. The self-satisfied smirk on his countenance changed to a look of chagrin, as Charlie took ample time to decide whether or not to employ him. He has worked for us before and suited us very well, but Charlie does not like to hire for a second time a man who has left us without good cause. I knew the pros and cons that my husband was silently balancing in his mind. 'Alcario thinks himself very smart — and it is true that he is a good worker. He moves like greased lightning and I can't bear a man who mopes along and drags his feet. He gets mad at the drop of a hat and may quit at a moment's notice. On the other hand, he knows our range and how we work cattle.'

'All right. You're hired, Alcario,' said Charlie finally, and smiles reappeared on our new vaquero's face.

'Where is your family?' I inquired.

'In Douglas, with my mother, Señora,' he answered. 'Juana and I have two children now. There is Maria Appolonia, who was learning to walk when we were here before, and Ofelia, who is now two-and-a-half years old.'

'I'll go to town and get them tomorrow,' promised Charlie.

For the best argument of all in favor of hiring Alcario is that he has a wife who would rather live here than in town.

The next day Charlie prepared to go to Douglas in the truck to bring back Juana, her children, and their household goods. He planned to take in a load of wood to make the trip pay for itself and for other things besides.

Although we are not yet reduced to the strait of the two Yankees on a desert island, who made a living by swapping jack-knives, we are approaching it. We barter for everything we can get by that means and Charlie had arranged to buy two new tire casings from Fred Carson and give stovewood in payment. It seems to me like a vicious circle — hauling wood to pay for tires on which to haul more wood — but the old truck must be shod.

I helped to load up the wood, as Alcario was riding, and when it was heaped to the very top, we put in the extra cargo. Charlie boosted up the empty, fifty-gallon gas drum, then stood high above me on the load to take the other things as I handed them to him: the mail sack; the black bag which contains a clean shirt and the miscellaneous odds and ends without which he never leaves home; the lunch (including a raw onion) that he usually takes along to save the expense of a restaurant meal. We topped off with the old overcoat and piece of canvas which are to be used if the truck quits on the way home. He has spent more than one cold night curled up among sacks of grain. We filled the radiator to the brim and he took a big canteen of water to pour in when the radiator boils on a hill.

'Lindbergh took nothing but a ham sandwich to Europe,' I commented, as Charlie lashed the ropes around the canvas which held the cargo together.

'He didn't go in this truck!' retorted my husband.

Just as I thought him ready to leave, Charlie dashed back into the house, snatched the fat, mail-order catalogue from

the shelf, tore an order-blank from the back, and began to write. As I passed the table, I glanced at the open catalogue, saw unenticing pictures of bolts, wrenches, and blow-torches, and went back to the kitchen to wash dishes. There are portions of a catalogue that interest me greatly. Each fall and spring when a new one comes, I spend an evening very happily in the ranch-woman's form of window shopping. I admire the new dresses and hats vastly, ejaculating from time to time, 'So this is Kansas City!'

'I'm going to have a keg of fence-staples come by freight,' Charlie called out to me. 'Do you want anything?'

I nearly dropped the plate I was washing. Do I want anything? Gracious! I want any number of things. Yet—at that crucial moment—I could not remember what they were.

'Hurry up. Tell me what to order.'

Eagerly I went into the dining-room, wiping my hands, well-nigh wringing them, for my startled wits refused to get down to business. I could only recall the old couple to whom a fairy suddenly offered three wishes.

'I'd like a black pudding,' said the old man, and there it was, smoking on the table.

'I wish the pudding was stuck on the end of your nose!' cried the old woman in a rage. And so it was.

'I wish it was off again!' snapped he. There was a flutter of wings and the fairy was gone.

'We need some generators for the gas lamp,' I said, to gain time.

Charlie wrote that item down on the order. As I searched my vacant mind, he made out a check, all save the amount, then looked up at me inquiringly, the tip of his pen quivering like the fairy's wing.

'What else?' he demanded.

Out of all the riches enumerated in an index which begins

with A batteries and ends with zinc-ointment, I could think of nothing more.

‘That’s all.’

Charlie added my forty-three cents to his total, filled in his check, and rushed away.

I had my remaining two wishes after I returned to my dish-pan. ‘I wish those lamp-generators were stuck to the end of my nose! I wish they were off again.’

After Charlie was well started on his way, I prepared for my own morning’s work by putting on my oldest riding-breeches (I wonder if the tailor would like a load of wood?), my least presentable khaki shirt, and my boots, minus the spurs. I was not to ride, but I know the value of a stout casting of leather about my shins when I am in the corral with a bunch of calves. Alcario had already gone out into the south pasture to look for some calves which we have been doctoring for screw-worms.

When he came back with the cattle, we cut the calves from their mothers and put them in the small crowding corral in which it would be easy to handle them. They were bawling before we touched them, because they had a vivid recollection of their recent troubles during the branding, vaccinating, castrating, ear-marking, and dehorning. Santiago, who makes no pretense of knowing anything about cattle, heard the commotion and came over to offer his help. Alcario ‘flanked’ the nearest calf, then knelt and held its head, while Santiago sat on the ground, holding one hind leg and pushing the other with his foot. I got down on my knees and doctored the calf with chloroform on a wad of cotton, afterward covering the wound with pine-tar to keep off the flies. We let the calf get up, and opened the gate so that he might run to his mother, who mooed her consolation and sniffed curiously at the odor of chloroform.

Pine-tar coated the heads of the calves that had been de-

horned a few days before. A pungent mixture of sheep-dip and old engine-oil had been painted on their fresh brands to make them peel off more easily. By the time we had finished with the third calf, I had samples of all the oils and odors on my clothes, my hair and my hands. Alcario lost his hold on the fourth calf. It jumped up unexpectedly and bowled me over into the trampled earth of the corral. We were laughing and jabbering in Spanish as I picked myself up. The men were struggling with the calf, trying to down him a second time. Suddenly I raised my head and saw four pairs of interested eyes, fixed upon us by two men and two women, who were gazing through the bars of the gate. A resplendent blue automobile had slipped up to the corral unheard and I recognized it as belonging to the campers in the glade.

‘We’ll be through in a minute!’ I shouted above the din. ‘This is the last calf.’

An expression of horror in the eyes of the spectators revealed to me that they had taken the sheep-dip and grime on my face for the natural complexion of a Mexican, and until I spoke, had assumed that Alcario, Santiago, and I were three of a kind.

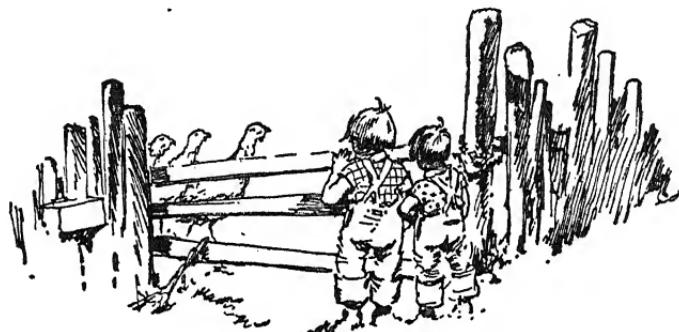
I joined them when I had doctored the last calf and the cattle had been turned back into the pasture. Beyond a doubt they had never seen anything quite like me before, yet worldliness has its kindly side, and they tried not to embarrass me by looking too closely at my horrific garb. I looked at theirs with admiration, for all four were dressed for the country with that costly simplicity which real country folk never achieve. The elder of the women explained that they had come up to see if they could buy milk, cream, and eggs from us. Could we supply them with fresh vegetables, chickens to fry, home-baked bread? The men wished to rent horses and ride about in the mountains.

It was hard to refuse them each and every one of these

simple things with any degree of graciousness, but I did my best. Our milk cow is going dry; our garden is past its prime; we have no chickens. I am too busy to bake extra bread and our horses are never, never used except for our own work. I was able to tell them where they might be able to buy milk and eggs.

‘You have nothing to sell, then?’ asked the older man in some bewilderment.

‘We can sell you a good bunch of steers and a few carloads of cows,’ I replied, and we parted with a laugh.



III. 'TWO LITTLE INJUNS'

GOBBLE! Gobble!' warned the big turkey, stamping his feet. His tail was spread majestically and his wing-tips dragged upon the ground.

Maria Appolonia and Ofelia shrieked and ran for the corral gate.

'Gobble, gobble, gobble! Horrible! Horrible!' cried the gobbler, his great head stretched forward as he pursued them.

Down on their stomachs flopped Alcario's small daughters and they rolled under the gate. After which they stood up and looked defiantly at the turkey through the bars. Mercifully, they did not know that he could easily fly over the gate if he chose.

Their terror was no disgrace. The belligerent bird is taller than Maria Appolonia and towers above Ofelia. Every animal on the place is larger than they are with the sole exception of Blanco, the cat, and they fear nothing but the turkey. All day long they explore the ranch, running in and out of corrals and barns, into the orchard and down to the river.

When small Ofelia becomes hungry in the course of their travels, she sits down on the ground and restores her energy by a nip from a hip flask. Each morning and noon, Juana fills a nursing-bottle with milk and puts it into the back pocket of Maria Appolonia's overalls, where it is at hand when Ofelia needs refreshment.

They chase the calves for the joy of seeing them run. They brandish little sticks and order the cows out of their pathway, as becomes the daughters of a vaquero. Horses draw near to snuff at them curiously. Since their parents display no anxiety about them, we do not suggest curtailing their rambles.

Alcario has fallen into his work quite as though he had never been away. As before, when we tell him how we want a thing done, he tells us of some vastly superior method used in Mexico.

'You are in the United States now,' Charlie reminds him; and he does as he is bid, with a shrug of the shoulders to say that the fault is ours if things are not properly done.

Juana is very different from the slim, sprightly, dainty young creature that she was three years ago. She has grown heavy and, with increased weight, logy and stolid. In place of the white cloth pinned smoothly around her head and fastened in a coquettish knot at the nape of her neck, a soiled bath-towel now droops about her square and oftentimes sullen face. I taught her to read when she was here before. She says she has forgotten how. Only one thing interests her: she likes to sew; and sits on the ground in the shade of a tree, busy for hours with scraps of cloth out of which she manages to make garments for the children. I marvel at her skill, since I must 'cut and contrive to get a nightcap out of a sheet.'

Except for the pleasure that Juana derives from making the small dresses, they are of little use. The children decline to wear anything but bib-overalls and little shirts that are

ever fluttering out at the sides. Maria Appolonia wears shoes. Ofelia is an untrammeled child of nature and means to remain one. When shoes were forced upon her the frosty morning after her arrival, she promptly (no doubt purposely) lost both of them in the first patch of thick grass. Since they could not be found, the soles of her little black feet are becoming as hard as the pads of Robles' paw.

'What a pity that Ofelia is not a boy!' exclaimed Alcario. He was saddling his horse and Ofelia was begging to be lifted to its back. 'I could so easily make her into a cowboy.'

'Teach her, anyway,' I suggested, swinging my saddle to the back of *Æohippus*.

'Never!' exclaimed Alcario in such heartfelt horror that I knew what he thought of my performances.

Ofelia continued to look at the horse so longingly that the father relented a little. After he was mounted, I lifted her to the saddle and he rode slowly around the big corral with Ofelia in his lap, her tiny hands grasping the saddle-horn. This was too tame for her. Suddenly she grasped the reins, flapped her short, bare legs against the saddle and shouted, '*Corre!*' (Run!) '*Papa, corre! corre!*'

They made the second round at a gallop.

It did seem a pity that she could not grow up to have a good horse beneath her and the open range ahead. Now I am not so sure that Alcario is wrong in imprisoning her in petticoats.

Santiago went to Alcario's house last evening after dark, when all the family were seated in the lighted kitchen. To amuse the children, Santiago opened the door a very little way and thrust inside his long, black, bony hand; reaching and grabbing at the air as though he meant to snatch someone. Maria Appolonia, terrified, screamed and hid her head in her mother's lap.

'Give me a knife!' yelled Ofelia. 'Give me a knife!'

Alcario was busy 'steepeling up a fence' while Charlie and I made a leisurely ride up Fern Canyon and over the ridge into Sycamore, where pale, graceful, bare branches arched over pools half hidden in fallen, yellow-brown leaves. We ate our lunches by the stream in a canyon so deep and sheltered that the trees scarcely swayed above us. The dogs splashed in a pool below us and came out to shake, and roll in the dry leaves. Nearby us the horses were licking the block of salt that had been left on a high bank beside the stream.

Far above us, on the slopes of Turtle Mountain, cowbells tinkled faintly, but we felt no urge to climb the long, steep trail. We believe we have now branded all of our calves, and any cow that is able to climb that mountain should need no attention from us. I am always careful to choose the front pages of newspapers for the outer wrapping of our lunches and after eating we each leaned back against a tree to read stale news and comment lazily upon it. We rode homeward slowly, following the ridges where cattle bed down at night beneath great junipers. There was no more scurrying through the brush after slick-eared calves; no headlong slides into arroyos, or swift ascents at the heels of fleeing cattle. When we arrived on the floor of the canyon with our horses unlathered, my husband looked me over appraisingly and noted my unusual sleekness.

'Your hat is on straight,' he announced approvingly. 'You have mended the sleeve of your jumper and your chaps hide the patch on your knee. The scratch that you got on your face when you ducked under an oak tree is almost well.'

'So many compliments all at once!' I exclaimed. 'What's it all about?'

'You said those nice campers wanted us to come to see them. We may as well stop there as we go home.'

As it was quite unlikely that I should ever wave my hair

and powder my nose in order to visit them, it did seem as good a time as any. We rode up nearly to the camp, dismounted, and left our horses and two of the dogs at the edge of the glade; then walked to the tents, Robles in attendance. As I had learned when they came to our ranch, the older couple are the Abbots from Chicago and the young people are their daughter and son-in-law, the Frasers. Instead of stopping at hotels and guest ranches, they have chosen to camp for a few weeks in the Arizona mountains. Their luxurious camping equipment is a new plaything and they invited us to admire all its comfortable devices.

The conversation soon divided us into two groups. The men were eager to learn things that Charlie could tell them and the women planned a trip to Douglas and wished to know which is the best beauty parlor there. They expressed no surprise when I said that I had never been in any of them. I did know of a little shop in which they could buy patterns and embroidery threads, although I had never entered it either.

A sudden uproar ended our conversation: the excited barking of dogs; shouts; the thud of hoofs. Charlie dashed away. At the edge of the timber was Charlie's big roan horse, Art, plunging, jumping, getting ready to pitch in rodeo form. To his back, holding the reins far too loosely, clung young Fraser, white and panic-stricken. While Charlie and Mr. Abbot were talking and no one was looking, he had slipped away and mounted the horse.

'Get off quick,' shouted Charlie, 'before the horse gets to going!'

With considerable help from the horse, who chose that moment to lunge, the young man landed in the brush on all fours.

'He — he looked so gentle — and I can ride,' quavered Fraser, rising unhurt and brushing off the leaves.

‘You’ve had all the luck,’ declared my husband. ‘Look at that!’

On a gravel bar by the river, Art was having a grand time pitching for all he was worth. He is a horse with a conscience and would never think of trying such a trick with his master. No one else is ever allowed to mount him, so it is a long time since he has had the fun of sunning anybody’s moccasins. Mounting a horse without first asking leave of his owner is one of the many things which simply are not done in a cow-country. Of that we said nothing as we congratulated Mr. Fraser upon his unbroken bones. We caught our horses and called the dogs.

‘Do you play bridge, Mr. Rak?’ asked Mrs. Abbot, just as we were ready to leave.

‘No, Mrs. Abbot,’ he replied suavely, ‘I do not care for cards.’

I smiled. He has been known to reply, ‘Hell, NO!’ to that same question.

‘I don’t care much for cards either!’ declared Mr. Abbot with considerable emphasis.

‘Do you play, Mrs. Rak?’ asked his wife.

‘I haven’t played for a long time,’ I answered truthfully.

We mounted and rode away with smiling, backward glances and hands upraised in farewell. I felt a curious sense of escape as my horse took me farther from the camp in the glade.

‘Evidently Mr. Abbot doesn’t want to play bridge and they want someone to make a fourth,’ said I, as we rode on at a swift running-walk, headed for home. It is fine to make a fourth — when two of the four are horses.



IV. THE SCHOOL ELECTION

EN miles from our ranch stands a one-roomed schoolhouse, built solidly of adobes and with broad windows on the sides. Before it lies a wide valley which is the mouth of Rucker Canyon. At the back is the tree-shaded river. Beside the school is a small cottage, called the 'teacherage,' in which the good bachelor teacher lives alone. Hidder among the hills are the homes of his pupils, who trudge to school, lunch-pail in hand, or gallop there on old cowponies

As family after family has sold its homestead to the nearest cowman and moved away, the number of pupils in the school has dwindled until at times it has been difficult to muster the attendance legally required to keep the school open. One year a married teacher with two children was employed in order to avoid closing the school. Therefore, it hardly seems practical to lavish money on new equipment, or to install playground apparatus for children who have horses to ride and trees to climb to take the kinks out of their legs after a day in school.

In a sparsely settled grazing country, the school elections are of importance to the cowmen, whose broad acres make them the largest and almost the only taxpayers. This year the election for a new member of the school board has been a close race between two candidates. One was a cowman. The other, one who paid so small a tax that he boasted loudly of what he would do for the school if he were elected, saying, 'The sky is the limit.' Every vote was of importance, and we were urgently summoned by telephone when noontime had passed and we had not yet been to the schoolhouse to cast our votes.

'My husband went into town yesterday,' I explained to the one who telephoned. 'He is coming home this afternoon and we shall go down together to vote.'

Upon second thought it seemed better for me to go on without waiting for Charlie, as the voting was very close and something might happen to prevent his getting home on time. Our car has not been working any too well, and I went out to the garage with many misgivings, wondering whether or not I could start it. The starter buzzed willingly enough — but nothing happened. No 'chooka-chooka' from the engine set the car a-tremble. Robles, who had hopefully climbed into the seat beside me, gave a whine of disgust and I echoed it.

He and I both got out of the car and I lifted the hood while he stood looking on, quite as though he knew all about the gadgets disclosed to view. So have I stood many a time, trying to look intelligent while Charlie tinkered with the engine. Robles had the better of me, because he is dumb by nature and I am all too likely to make foolish suggestions.

In spite of myself I have learned a few things about our own car. I jiggled the jigger that informs one whether or not 'she is getting gas.' She wasn't. I unscrewed the plug at the top of the vacuum, fetched a funnel and a pint of gas, poured

it through the hole as I have seen Charlie do, and replaced the plug.

‘Chooka-chooka!’

Robles jumped into his seat, we said good-bye to the two sorrowful dogs who must remain at home, and were off.

Along the fence by the outer gate, cordwood is piled, three ricks deep. Outside the fence stood a bull, and when I got out of the car to close the gate, his attitude seemed peculiar. I walked closer to see. There was his tail, stretched straight out behind him and the long curl at the end of it was tangled in a small coil of barbed wire that someone had carelessly hung on a fence-post. Even though he was gentle ordinarily, I knew better than to go near enough to untangle his tail. He would be almost certain to blame me for his troubles and take after me the moment he was freed. Because of the cord-wood, I could not approach him from the far side of the fence, and from the top of the ricks I could not reach his tail. There wasn’t a man on the place. There never is when you need one.

I had to try something, for there were signs to show that the bull had been caught hours before. I picked up some rocks and put them on the top of the nearest rick, and climbed up myself. Then Robles and I sent simultaneously a rock, a bark, and a blood-curdling yell in the direction of the bull. In his sudden fright he gave a big jump — and was free, at the cost of the white curl at the end of his tail.

Having done our good deed for the day, Robles and I got back into the car and started again for the polls.

A mile or so below the school is a post-office to which mail is fetched by a carrier three times a week. To make use of it regularly would make extra trips for us, since we have to go to town anyway for other things. We do mail a letter there occasionally when we are in a hurry. I had a letter to send off, and it seemed a good idea to go first to the post-office, so I

went sailing past the school, noting out of the tail of my eye the cars drawn up before it. Evidently everyone and his aged grandmother had been summoned to the polls. The cowmen had a little the best of it because we have a private telephone line running from one cattle ranch to another. It was built at our joint expense and no one else is connected.

There being a regulation which provides that a post-office may not be in a dwelling, the postmistress had met the requirement by building near her house a lumber edifice not much larger than a piano box, in which to house the belongings of Uncle Sam. Wind, coming in through loosely battened cracks, fluttered the papers inside the official cubbyhole of the post mistress. Distressingly wide crevices between the boards of the floor set me to humming:

‘I wrote a letter to my love,
And on the way I dropped it.
A little dog he picked it up
And put it in his pocket.’

It seemed more prudent to let Robles have the letter in the first place, but it wasn’t ‘to my love,’ anyway, so I let it fall through the slit provided for the purpose and squeezed out through the door.

‘This post-office is awful small,’ conceded its mistress as I emerged. ‘I think I’ll build a new one in the spring and use this one for a chicken-coop.’

By this time I was only two miles from Moore’s ranch, and I yielded to a temptation to go on down there for a little visit before voting. When I left the Moores’ house, entered the car and stepped on the starter, it buzzed. Nothing else happened. Wearily I lifted the hood and jiggled the jigger. ‘She wasn’t getting gas.’ This was disconcerting. Never before had it happened that the vacuum, once primed, failed to work for the whole trip. I poured in the gas that was offered

me by Laurence, borrowed a piece of siphoning hose and an empty baking-powder can for emergency use on the way home. Twice before I reached the schoolhouse, I had to unscrew the cap of the gas-tank, siphon a baking-powder canful and pour it into the vacuum.

‘And I’ve got ten miles to go this way,’ I muttered through lips dripping and reeking with gasoline that I had sucked through the hose.

Naturally I was both disheveled and disgruntled when I drew up before the schoolhouse and went inside. Robles followed me, wagging a friendly greeting to the sovereign voters who were waiting in the schoolyard and in the back of the schoolroom as well. I knew only one or two among them, the cattlemen and their wives having voted early and gone home. I walked up through the aisle to the teacher’s desk, where the man was seated who presided over the election. On the blackboard behind the desk the names of the two candidates were written in chalk, and everyone there knew that I would vote for the cattleman. I asked for the pencil and slip of paper wherewith to make my ballot.

‘You haven’t any right to vote,’ declared the man at the desk, looking at me severely.

The room was significantly quiet. Everyone was listening intently, and I knew that this was some deliberately planned scheme to make me lose my vote. They thought it might work because I had come alone.

‘Why have I no right to vote?’ I demanded. ‘I am registered.’ I opened my purse. ‘Here is my registration card.’

‘You can’t vote because you don’t live in this school district.’

‘I haven’t moved, and I’ve always voted before in school elections.’

‘Well, you had no right to,’ he declared. ‘You are not in this district.’

‘My! How glad I am!’ I cried, and cast a joyous smile upon everyone present, including men who had put their heads in through the door to hear better. ‘Mr. Rak and I will notify the county assessor that our vote is challenged — and we’ll never have to pay the special school tax any more!’

The silence was unbroken for a moment after I stopped speaking, then from the back of the room a man’s voice growled disgustedly, ‘Aw, let ’er vote!’

Pencil and paper were now grudgingly handed to me, and I sat down in one of a long row of folding seats with school desks before them. There came a sudden burst of laughter from the back of the room, and I turned to see what had changed the temper of the crowd so quickly. In the seat just behind me, erect, expectant, sat Robles. When folks sit down before tables, he expects his share of anything going — in this case a ballot.

I deposited my own ballot in the box and Robles and I quitted the scene hastily, as stage-folk ‘leave ’em while they’re laughing.’

I had to work my passage home, siphoning, pouring, then jumping into the car to drive as fast as possible in the vain hope that the gas might take me farther if I went speedily. I was like the darky, painting the chicken-coop at a furious rate, ‘Tryin’ to git fru befo’ de paint giv out.’

I was on my knees, siphoning, when Charlie drove up behind me.

‘What in the world have you been doing?’ he asked. ‘You look tired and disgusted.’

‘No wonder!’ I exploded. ‘I’ve been exercising my franchise.’



V. MAKING A FOURTH

THE Abbots and Frasers strolled up here one afternoon when Charlie happened to be at home and we took them on a little tour of the corrals to show them how cattle are handled. They seemed disappointed upon seeing how little real ranch life resembles a rodeo.

We women were walking slowly after the men, when suddenly Mrs. Abbot and her daughter screamed and clasped one another in what they may have thought a last embrace. Not more than ten feet from us and still a-coming was our largest bull, a mountainous creature named Keno. I stepped in front of him, and he halted, head down, and made a 'whuff-whuff' sound through his nostrils. All in the world he wanted was some grain, and I put some in the feeding-trough for him after the other women had flown from the corral. Even when they peeped through the bars of the gate and saw Keno eating so placidly, while I stood with my hand on his thick neck, Mrs. Abbot and her daughter refused to be reassured, and said that they were cured forever of all desire to

see more of life on a cow-ranch. We returned to the house, which is the sole spot in Old Camp Rucker where one never sees a cow.

'I do wish you and Mr. Rak played cards,' began Mrs. Abbot when we were safely indoors. 'My husband will play with us a little while at night, but he simply won't play at all in the daytime — and there is so little to do here.'

'I've not played at all on the ranch,' I answered. 'When we are lucky enough to have visitors, we'd so much rather spend the time talking.'

'It doesn't matter a bit if you are out of practice,' coaxed Mrs. Fraser. 'You'll soon pick it up again. Do try!'

'We could give you some lessons ourselves,' offered Mrs. Abbot eagerly.

'Tomorrow is Thursday,' remarked her daughter with apparent irrelevance; and while the day of the week seemed to have no bearing upon the conversation, it was the thing that decided me to yield to their entreaties. I really could not let them go away with the idea that I was a slavv who was not even allowed to have a Thursday afternoon out.

'I'll come tomorrow if you like,' I offered.

'Oh! Will you? We'll be so glad, and we'll give you a bridge lesson then.'

While making my excuses to them for not wishing to play cards, I had told them nothing but the truth, yet it lacked something of being the whole truth. I grew up in a card-playing household. I knew my diamonds, spades, and clubs before my ABC's, and I learned to count on the pips. Many a time in my childhood I tiptoed into the back door when I came home from school, left my books in the scullery, and fled again for fear of being captured and made to spend an hour or two at the card-table, 'making a fourth.' As I was caught

early and often in spite of all my precautions, it was impossible for me not to learn to play bridge fairly well, although I could never see why people wanted to hold thirteen bits of pasteboard while the world was full of tennis racquets and bridle reins.

Thursday afternoon came and I was 'out'; seated at the card-table which was just within the walls of the largest tent of the camp; the trees and the river in full view each time that I lifted my eyes from the cards in my hand. Mr. Fraser dealt first, and no dealer ever did better by me. I do not see how I could have avoided making a little slam in no trumps. Then Mrs. Abbot dealt — and I made four spade tricks. I couldn't help that either. As the play continued and my phenomenal luck with it, even my partner added her wounded, reproachful glances to those that were being cast upon me. Although no word was said, I felt like a card sharper on an ocean liner.

'What kind of luck did you have?' asked Charlie when I came home an hour before he had expected me.

'Such good luck that they are not likely to ask me to play again,' I answered. And they did not.

A day or so later they came up to tell us that they had grown tired of camping. They were going to store their camp equipment and stay at a lively guest ranch, where, among the other necessities of their luxurious lives, they could be sure of finding the indispensable fourth at bridge. Nothing is now left to remind us of them — or of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world — but a small, worn place in the grass where their tents stood. We felt all along that they were exceptionally nice people and now we have proof of it: they buried their tin cans!

We invited them to breakfast with us on the morning of their departure, and went down to the glade with them afterward to see them drive away. The big car whisked down the

road, the gay trailer bobbing along after it, hastening back to a life so foreign to our own.

We watched them out of sight without regret or envy. Kings, queens, even knaves, may be excellent company, but ours is a world of cows, dogs, and horses. Let us stay there.



VI. A TENDERFOOT BOY

EVER since we have lived on a cattle ranch we have sought polite phrases with which to refuse the services of young men and boys who want to come here and work for their board, or even work and pay board besides. Mothers urge us to take their sons — 'a few months on a ranch will be so good for Johnny.' It does not occur to them that it may not be so good for the Raks.

Even when we hire an experienced cowpuncher, he is not of much use to us until he has been here long enough to know our rough, brushy range, our cattle, and our own way of working them. To train a boy, who will leave us just as he is beginning to know enough to open a gate without being told, is more than we have cared to tackle. Now, after declining for years to do so, we have agreed to let a boy come here for a few weeks. We do not know in the least what he can do; we have misgivings; but there were circumstances which made it difficult to refuse to take him, and he arrived last night after dark.

Harry Carter, whom we had never seen until he came yesterday from California, is a slight, fair boy of seventeen, with

small, pale blue eyes and a 'poker face' behind which he hides his thoughts. He uses his flat, emotionless voice as little as possible. Charlie and I are given to enthusiasms; to laughing and cussing with appropriate gestures, so perhaps the third member of our household is all the better for being quiet. We have been told that Harry is here in search of the glamour of a cow-country (we hope he finds it), but no one could guess it.

'What do you expect to do here, Harry?' I asked, as we were eating breakfast.

'I'll do anything you want me to,' he replied amiably and indefinitely.

'Can you ride?'

'Well,' he said, looking modestly down at his fried eggs, 'I'm not a regular cowboy — exactly.'

As soon as we finished eating, Charlie rode off with Alcario. We have agreed that I am to be Harry's philosopher and guide, as the men cannot keep their eyes on the cattle and a tenderfoot simultaneously. While I washed the dishes and made the beds, Harry unpacked his clothes and his precious, double-barreled shotgun, which he confesses that he has never yet fired. I had taken the precaution of sending his people a careful list of the things he would need here: mostly overalls and flannel shirts, a cowboy's felt hat, a canvas jumper, and gauntlet gloves. I put on my riding-clothes and we went over to the corral where mounts had been left for us.

We have decided to let him ride Froggy, an elderly, wise cowpony, so named because of his tremendous hind quarters. He stands perfectly still while he is being mounted. He would continue to stand still all day by preference. He is too stolid to shy, 'see boogers' or pitch; too lazy even to swish away the flies.

I caught Tobe and saddled him for myself. Then, as Harry had looked on without making a move to catch his horse,

I bridled and saddled Froggy also. I could see that the stirrups were dangling down too long for the boy, so I showed Harry how to measure them by standing at arm's length from the saddle, putting the tip of his finger on the center of the seat and holding the stirrup under his armpit. We unlaced the stirrup leathers and retied them. We put on chaps, led the horses out of the corral, and closed the gate behind us.

While Tobe stamped his feet and wagged his ears impatiently, I waited for Harry to mount. He stood there with the reins in his hand, looking first at Froggy, then at me, then back at Froggy, who seemed to have gone to sleep. My heart sank. I wanted so much to like the boy, and I knew that I could not if he were afraid to get on that gentle old horse.

Harry flushed and cleared his throat.

'Mrs. Rak,' he said hesitantly, 'is there any particular side of a horse that you get up on?'

He had never mounted one before.



VII. THE PLOWMEN

WHEN we had a field cleared several years ago, we left untouched a triangle of land adjoining it, where, between outcropping rocks, grew Apache plume, a low shrub whose seeds are wafted away by every breeze as when children puff at dandelions. This year Charlie has decided to clear the few acres of this neglected patch of land and plant it to hay, of which we never seem to have enough. Old stumps have been blasted and grubbed out; the Apache plume has been burned; rocks by the thousands have been hauled off in the stone-boat, a sled made of thick planks and runners of seasoned ash. It remained to break the sod thick with rocks and matted roots. As that work was too heavy for our own teams, Charlie asked a valley farmer to come here with two teams and an extra man to break the new land for us. Most of our casual labor is performed by Mexicans and we arrange to board them with our vaquero. These farmers were Americans, and I myself must see to it that three meals a day were prepared in keeping with the appetites of plowmen.

The men must be paid as well as fed, and the best way to raise the money seemed to be by killing a fat steer and selling the beef to a market in town. In spite of having sold our black Galloway cows some time ago and the black bulls even earlier, a black calf still appears in the herd occasionally, product of a persistent strain of 'cold blood.' When one is found, we fatten it for beef, and we had been feeding a big steer which we had named Navajo, because the black and white of his hide fell into a pattern as regular and effective as any that a Navajo squaw could weave into a blanket.

Harry had never seen a beef killed and dressed (I wish I had not), and he was therefore very keen to be allowed to help skin it. If we were to get a good price for the beef, it was necessary to be very careful not to nick the meat and thus mar its appearance while removing the skin. I wanted the hide to keep and to have it tanned with the hair on because of the beautiful and unique marking, and I did not want it nicked either by the sharp skinning-knives. So Harry had to content himself with looking on while Charlie, who is expert, removed the hide.

When the beef, hooked to a singletree, had been pulled up into a cottonwood tree to cool off during the night, the men brought over to me the part of the meat that I could keep to use in feeding my augmented family. These were the head and a part of the tough neck, the heart, liver, tongue, and brains. Ranch women know very well how to make these palatable, and were cooking them in a dozen ways before we ever suspected that they harbored vitamins.

Very early on the following morning, Charlie drove the truck under the tree from which the beef was suspended, spread a canvas over the load of wood with which the truck had been filled the night before, lowered the beef to the top of the load, and wrapped it well. Then he and Harry started off for Douglas. Harry was not at all anxious to go, but Charlie

took him at my urgent request in order that I need not cook a midday meal for him. The truck is a 'rough-rider,' and is almost old enough to be a veteran of the Spanish War. Its cab has been covered with the hides of two ancient bulls who were valiant fighters in their day, Red Boy and Joseph. Everyone in the countryside knows the unique vehicle, and when the writer of the social items for the *Douglas Dispatch* sees the old truck leaning against the curb, she writes, 'Charles L. Rak motored in from his ranch in Rucker Canyon.'

I had a whole day alone in which to prepare for our plowmen, and that was not too long. They were to drive up in two farm wagons and would bring bedrolls with them. I had only to feed them, and that was quite enough. An ovenful of bread was baked by eleven o'clock in the morning. Beans first filled the pressure cooker, and, when they had been transferred to an iron pot to simmer with their seasonings, I cooked the beef tongue under pressure until it peeled easily and was ready for brazing. Pies, cookies, and cakes were made and set on the storeroom shelves. This was no occasion for 'wind-puddin's' of meringue and gelatine. In the late afternoon I had all this done and was ready to begin the real work of getting the evening meal when I heard the unaccustomed sound of creaking farm wagons, and went over to the barn to tell the men where they might feed their teams and corral them for the night.

Mr. Swenson greeted me in the corral, a heavy, slow-motioned, deep-chested man, with Scandinavian features and coloring, rarely seen under the Southwestern sun. With him was his son Pete, tall, gangling, freckled, with rawboned wrists and distressingly prominent Adam's apple. I had seen these men often before. They live in a tumbledown house on a side road in the valley, surrounded by broken fences, dying fruit trees, withered rosebushes, and piles of tin cans and

ashes. Yet more than once I have heard them boast, 'When we bought this-here farm, it was the purtiest place in the hull of Sulphur Springs Valley.'

'Where kin we water the horses?' asked Mr. Swenson. 'They're powerful thirsty.'

'Thirsty!'—I was amazed. 'You drove them across the river time and time again on the way up here. Why didn't they drink then?'

'Well, 'pears like these-here horses never did drink out of nothing but a trough, and they wouldn't put their noses down into the crick at all.'

I turned on the valve at the tank that allows water to flow to the trough. We drove the horses to water, and we did make them drink. I showed the men where the grain is kept, and the horses were lavishly fed. I opened the cabin and saw the bedrolls installed. Then I came to the house, built up a roaring fire, and fell to cooking in earnest. Charlie and Harry drove in before the meal was ready and presently we sat down at the table.

Before Charlie was a platter on which was a brazed tongue, surrounded by vegetables, flanked by dishes of rice, beans, and gravy. Charlie carved and served me. Carved more liberally and passed the second plate to Mr. Swenson, who regarded it dubiously.

'Tongue, ain't it?' he asked.

'Yes, beef tongue.'

'Well, don't give me none. I don't hold with eating nothing out of the insides of animals.'

'Mary, you'd better cook some bacon,' suggested Charlie.

I was sitting there dumbly, remembering the contents of my larder, wondering how I was ever to feed the men for three whole days. I rose to go to the kitchen.

'Do you eat tongue and liver?' I asked young Pete Swenson fearfully.

'Yes'm,' he replied, to my relief. 'I eat 'em now, but I used to didn't.'

The felicity of the phrase enchanted me, and I began slicing bacon with a will, whispering it over and over as it came trippingly from my tongue. 'Used to didn't. Used to didn't.' I knew at last that I must cease or I would be sure to say it some time when I ought to shouldn't.

The plowman homeward plods his weary way.'

I have been told that Gray, when writing that line, found that its seven words could be arranged in seven different ways. That was all very well for the poet, who could take his time, and had not to have dinner ready for the plowman when homeward he plodded.

After both men and horses had breakfasted well, the sod began to roll over from the gleaming plowshares. Charlie went out with his team also and worked in the old field where the land was mellow and free from rocks. He and Alcario were taking turns at that work, day and day about, one riding the range while the other plowed, and Alcario's team was munching hay in preparation for the next day's labor.

Mr. Swenson seemed contented with his enforced diet of eggs, bacon, and beans, even though the eggs did come from the inside of the hens. He confided to me that he was partial to a concoction which he called gravy, a thick, gummy, white-sauce which he poured over everything in his plate indiscriminately, and it was very easy to provide him with a great bowl of that delicacy for every meal.

Harry went over to the field to help by picking up rocks and Pete allowed him to plow one long furrow. Harry was not strong enough to hold the plow-point in the ground, and when it hit a rock or root it jumped out. Pete told him patronizingly that that kind of plowing was called 'cut and cover.'

I had fancied that it would be pleasant for Harry to have here a country boy of his own age and that they would fraternize, but it did not turn out that way. Pete has no reverence for 'book-larnin'," and seemed to feel superior because he was stronger and more used to work than the city boy. On the other hand, when Pete told long stories about the pastimes he enjoyed with his brother, beginning them always with 'me and Buck' do this and that, Harry listened with an expression which said that he thought Pete and Buck could have been better employed.

At the end of the second day, Charlie told me with much pleasure that Mr. Swenson had offered to swap one of his big horses for one of our young Holstein milk cows. The horse, Jerry, a big brown stallion, is well gaited and has been broken to the saddle, although he is too heavy to be used in that way. He should make an excellent sire for the big horses that Charlie wishes to raise for his own use. In spite of hard work — possibly because of it — Charlie has grown too heavy for the ordinary run of cowpony, and no longer merits his boyhood nickname, 'Slim.' Good young horses are not easily found, as few ranchers hereabouts raise more than they need for their own use. Mares, however, can be bought, for cowmen are rarely willing to ride them.

'What's the matter with Jerry that Mr. Swenson wants to swap him off for a cow?' I asked skeptically. I have no qualification as a horse-trader except a deep suspicion that something ails the other man's horse.

'Nothing is the matter with him,' responded Charlie, 'except that he breaks fences, smashes gates, and causes trouble with the Swensons' neighbors in the Valley. Up here there are no neighbors, and we can keep him in the big beef pasture with the mares where he will have no chance to do any harm.'

As the Holstein milk cow that Charlie intended trading for

the stallion can also break fences and smash gates, there seemed nothing to be said against the swap.

The Swensons finished breaking the land in three days and drove away with their two wagons piled high with the juniper wood which was part of their pay for the plowing. It was arranged that Charlie should drive down to their farm three days later, transporting the milk cow in the truck. Alcario was to go with him, taking his saddle along, so that he might ride back home on Jerry, who might not care much for motoring.

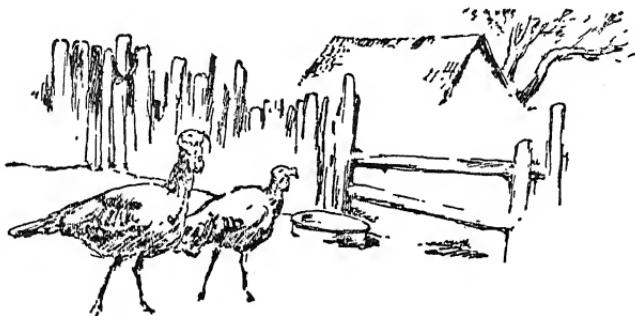
In the meantime, Charlie bought three mares from a neighbor, medium-sized, gentle creatures, not very young, but still capable of giving us two or three colts apiece. One was a bay, one brown, one a blue-roan. As Jerry's mother was said to have been a sorrel, we were likely to have anything in the colt line except a pinto. We were both looking forward greatly to the pleasure of raising and petting little colts. Mousie and Friday, the last colts to be born on the ranch, were now half-grown and in another year would be ready for 'gentling' for the saddle.

Alcario rode in late one afternoon on Jerry, unsaddled him and led him to the trough for water. The great stallion had never been used to looking after his own needs, to drinking from a pool, to browsing on tree or shrub or cropping grass from a hillside. Now he must learn all these things because we had no intention of keeping him chained in a stall or of filling a manger with grain or hay for him twice a day as had been done on the Swensons' farm.

Jerry was standing in the corral, without rope or halter, when the three new mares came running down from the home pasture and entered the water lot. The stallion saw them and reared back, his forefeet high in the air.

'Wheeeee!' he squealed, and, rushing to the high lumber gate that separated him from the mares, he thrust his great

head over it, leaned against it with his tremendous shoulders, and pushed. There was a crash of rending, splintering timbers. 'Wheeeee!' he squealed again triumphantly as the gate fell in fragments about his feet, and he burst forth, for the first time, free!



VIII. THANKSGIVING

A WEEK after the men were through plowing, Alcario announced that he must leave us at once.

I 'In the Salt River Valley I have a brother,' he explained, 'and I have not seen him for a year. Now he has sent word that he has found a fine job for me on the ranch where he is working. This work will last only three months, and at the end of that time I can come back here if you need me.'

This was a cheeky proposal, but it happened to be a welcome one to us. While we do not think it profitable to discharge a good man in order to save a cowboy's wages for a month or so, we could do without Alcario very nicely for the present. If he failed to return, we could find someone else as good, although we could not hope to replace Ofelia — the untamed. The Rincon family piled into the truck and were taken to town shortly before Thanksgiving, when I was in the midst of preparations for the holiday, and the gobbler that the children feared had already been killed and was hanging under the eaves to freeze.

Long ago I gave up keeping chickens, as coyotes, bobcats,

skunks, and foxes made it too easy to count my chickens after they were hatched. The log henhouse, which had been the smithy of Old Camp Rucker, went untenanted for months. Then Charlie brought home in his truck a grain sack from which issued indignant, muffled squawks. When he untied the sack, there flew out two indignant, ruffled hen-turkeys, which had been given to us by our neighbor, Mrs. Krentz of the Spear E's. It was then October. We named one turkey Thanksgiving and the other Christmas, soon shortened to Thanky and Christy. They came to be fed when they were called and they came to be fed when they were not called. Soon they abandoned all pretense of living in the henhouse, or anywhere other than at our back door. At night they sociably roosted in the pine tree nearest the house.

On that year, when Thanksgiving Day arrived, we ate a duck, being unable to bear the thought of Christy's loneliness if we ate Thanky. On December twenty-fifth we ate a pork roast. How could we possibly eat Christy and leave Thanky to spend her nights all alone in the pine tree? In February both Christy and Thanky began to lay eggs; whereupon we bought a gobbler and started in to raise enough nameless turkeys to enable us to enjoy our holiday dinners.

The 'varmints' let our flock alone that year, and what with grasshoppers, acorns, and corn, the young birds grew fat, glossy, and iridescent. Thanky and Christy soon had to wear aluminum bracelets to distinguish them from their big children. Although it was a little annoying to have a whole flock of tame turkeys around the house, we encouraged them to stay near home, where we could protect them from the depredations of campers, particularly during the deer-hunting season. Even after the young turkeys were fully grown, we postponed killing them. Charlie could always think up some plausible reason why he should not molest the birds, and we kept right on eating beef all the week and Sunday too. We

knew that the turkeys looked beautiful when they came toward us through the dew-sparkled grass, the level rays of the rising sun shining through their transparent, scarlet wattles; a light breeze swaying the outspread tail-feathers of the gobblers. We did not know how they tasted.

One chilly autumn morning, I made ready to spend the day with Gussie Moore, who lives twelve miles away, at the mouth of Rucker Canyon. Our poor dogs looked so disconsolate as they watched me take the car from the garage that I went back to the house and propped open the outer door of the kitchen, allowing them to go and come as they chose. As an additional solace, I filled one pan with milk and another with cornbread and set these on the kitchen floor, in plain view from the open door.

Usually the dogs rush to the gate to greet us when we return from even the briefest absence. When I came back from the Moores' in the late afternoon, there was not a bark or a tail-wag in the yard. I put up the car and walked along the path to the house, still mysteriously unwelcomed. There was no sign of life about the place until I passed the kitchen windows, from which a row of woe-begone faces peered out at me. A beak — Thanky's beak — was tapped frantically against the window-pane. Beside her huddled Christy and several of the young turkeys, dejected, rumpled, minus many feathers.

Inside the kitchen were all the dogs in a welter of bread, milk, and feathers, so rejoiced to see me and to be released from their tremendous responsibility. From the mournful 'Ki-i! Ki-i!' of the turkeys, the yelps of the dogs, and the evidence before my eyes, I knew all. The cheeky turkeys had entered the house to steal the dogs' cornbread and milk, which they had seen through the open door. Whereupon the honest, self-righteous dogs had not allowed the turkeys to go outside again, and had kept them perched upon the drainboard,

the stove, and the dish-cupboard for hours, awaiting my return.

As I heated kettles of water and began cleaning up the horrific mess, I decided that henceforth we should eat a turkey on every possible occasion. And we have.

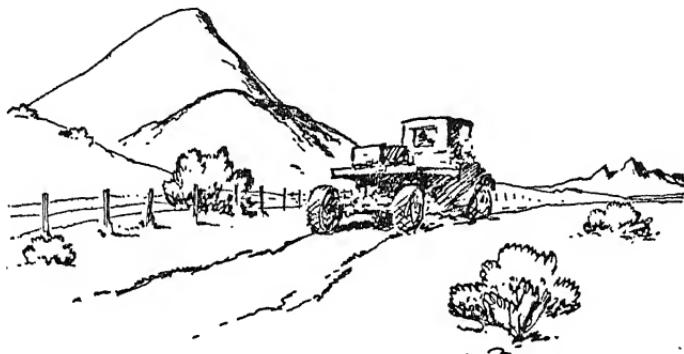
Thanksgiving Day is now over, and I am thankful for that. The big gobbler was tender and juicy, and we had friends from town to help us eat it. Yet we did not enjoy the day, knowing that when our dinner was over we had only two dishes to fill for dogs instead of three.

Two days before Thanksgiving, we were awakened at dawn by the furious barking of Scooter and Negrito, and from a knoll above the Home Pasture came the yapping, jeering cry of coyotes.

I opened the door, and the two dogs fairly flew out, across the yard and into the timber that surrounds us. Robles merely raised his head and listened. He had followed the horses all the previous day and saw no reason for chasing coyotes at daybreak.

Negrito came in exhausted in the middle of the forenoon. Scooter has not come back, and we no longer expect ever to see him again. One coyote could not have killed him. We believe that he outran the slower Negrito and was set upon and killed by the pack of coyotes.

Poor Scooter, yellow, chalk-eyed, cross-grained — and dear.



IX. MRS. TROUBLE AND KENO

FOR some time I have been observing that Harry does not like to learn anything from a woman. In the past he has submitted perforce to instruction from petticoated teachers in such minor branches as 'readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic.' Now he inwardly rebels against learning from one of them the cowboy's three R's, 'ridin', 'ropin', runnin'-iron.' This would not matter particularly if it were not that Charlie utterly declines to teach the boy himself. He says that nobody taught him. Would-be cowpunchers must learn in the traditional way, asking no questions, watching the other fellow — and the cow. As I was obliged to learn by that tortuous method, I should like to give Harry a little of that hard-won knowledge, but he merely listens to me with the bored attention which says, 'I'll be polite if it kills me.'

Maybe there is something to be said for Charlie's educational methods.

One day my husband went to town in the truck and Harry

chose to stay at home, since it is by no means a pleasure to pound over a rough road in that ancient, balky vehicle. For an hour he polished his shotgun with loving care, then filled his pockets with shells and went off after lunch in search of rabbits. They proved elusive and by mid-afternoon he was back, asking me to tell him of something that he could do. There are so few things that he can do alone.

‘There is a yearling heifer in the home field,’ I said. ‘She must have crawled in through the fence somehow and now she can’t find the way out. She has had no water, so you might put her out.’

‘I’ll have to wrangle horses, then?’ he asked. He did not relish that prospect, for he has learned that the horses never come in from the pasture willingly except in the early morning when they know that they are to be fed grain.

‘You won’t need a horse,’ said I. ‘You can drive the heifer out on foot.’

I shall never be a cowboy to the extent of walking a mile to get a horse on which to ride half that distance.

Harry cheered up at that and went off to the field, leaving me to my own job of catching up with the mending. He dragged himself in an hour later, red-faced, disheveled, his hair clinging damply to his forehead. As he dropped wearily into a chair, I gave him a casual nod of greeting and went on with my patching.

He squirmed, sighed, wiped his forehead. Finally he said, ‘I didn’t get the heifer out of the field.’

‘Why not?’ I asked with an air of indifference.

‘Because I couldn’t!’ he burst out. ‘When I got around her at one end of the field, she just ran to the other end. She hasn’t sense enough to see an open gate. I’ve been running around after her ever since I went over there, and she’s right back in the same corner she was in when I began. That heifer is a fool!’

I smiled placidly and cut out a patch exactly the right size for the hole in Charlie's corduroy pants.

'It doesn't matter,' I said consolingly. 'I'll be through with the mending pretty soon and I'll get her out myself.'

'You'll get her out!' he exploded. 'It would take two cowboys on good horses to get that brute to the gate!'

I threaded my needle.

'Maybe Mr. Rak could rope her and drag her through the gate,' Harry continued hotly, 'but you can't!'

He knows that I cannot even throw a loop over a snubbing-post.

I put on a sweater presently and started out to deal with the heifer. Instead of going directly to the field, I stopped off at the barn long enough to put a few lumps of cottonseed cake in a bucket and take it along with me. Harry said nothing, but out of the tail of my eye I saw his grin. He thought I expected to entice that 'snaky' range heifer by means of the grain, a feat akin to catching a bird by sprinkling salt on its tail.

In the water-lot were the milk cows, Peggy Holstein and Mrs. Finnie. I knew them far too well to believe that they would allow themselves to be driven away from the vicinity of the barn and the corrals just before feeding-time, but they fell in behind me eagerly when I jiggled the bucket and they heard the lumps of cake rattling. They followed me into the field. So did Harry. I put down the bucket and motioned to him to hide with me in a clump of trees at the edge of the clearing, from which we could see the heifer.

The poor, bewildered creature had been terrified, first by solitude, then by Harry's pursuit. She now drew nearer and nearer to Peggy and Mrs. Finnie, who were fighting over the feed. She joined them, happy and relieved to be with her own kind once more. When the milk cows decided that there was more grain in the barn than in the bucket, the heifer trotted

out of the field with them and into the round corral, where I opened a gate and she ran out to the open range.

Harry surprised me after supper by offering to wipe the dishes.

'Mrs. Rak,' he began diffidently, as he polished a glass, 'did you think that up by yourself — how to get the heifer out of the field?'

'Land, no!' said I, chuckling. 'I learned it by watching Charlie, after running my own legs off just as you did.'

In a rarely expansive moment, Harry recently told us that his great ambition was to go on big exploring expeditions to the polar regions. This choice of a career apparently dated from the previous week, during which he had been reading that tragic story of the Antarctic, *The Great White South*. He earnestly inquired how he could get into an exploring party, and was somewhat disheartened upon learning that one must either contribute heavily to the expenses or be very skilled in some form of work necessary to the success of the expedition. By way of consolation, Charlie told him that a man who can cook a good meal on a campfire is welcome almost anywhere, and Harry lost no time in following me out to the kitchen, where I had started cooking our dinner.

Hitherto he had shown no interest in kitchen matters, other than to wonder how I manage to empty so quickly the woodbox which he must fill. In his own city home, food is something which a maid holds in a silver dish at his left elbow. Until he came here he had never cracked the ice for freezing ice cream, turned the dasher of a churn, or licked the spoon and bowl to get the last, sweet dab of cake batter.

'We'll cook cowboy potatoes today,' I decided, when he asked for a cooking lesson. 'That is a good dish that one can cook over a campfire.'

Harry diced salt pork and potatoes and wept over the onions. After all the ingredients had been put in an iron pot

in their proper order, we left them to simmer on the back of the stove. Just before dinner was ready, I called him and let him season his first dish.

At suppertime that evening he made very creditable baking-powder biscuits under my direction, and Charlie told him how cowboys make them without mixing-bowl or spoon. They roll down the cloth of the flour sack to form a rim about the flour. Then they scoop out a little hollow space in the top of the flour, add enough baking-powder, melted grease, salt, and water to make the amount of bread they require, and mix the dough with their fingers. The biscuits are pinched off and dropped into the Dutch oven without the need of rolling-pin, cutter, or bread-board.

'That would be very convenient at the South Pole,' said Harry enthusiastically.

Today at noon I called Harry, who was sitting in the living-room, and asked him if he wanted to learn how to make that cowboy's delight — gravy. This time he came out to the kitchen with no show of eagerness, holding the book which he had been reading when I interrupted him, his forefinger still within to mark the page.

After cooking the flour in bacon-fat until it was brown and bubbly, I added the cold milk and seasoning. Then I handed the big iron spoon to Harry and told him to stir the gravy constantly until it was as thick as we usually serve it. It was too hot in the kitchen for whipping cream, so I took a bowl and eggbeater to the cool storeroom and remained there a few moments to prepare the dessert. Upon coming out of the storeroom, I was greeted by the unmistakable stench of milk that has boiled over onto a hot stove.

I ran to the kitchen, thinking that Harry must have gone out, leaving the gravy untended. No. He was at his post before the stove. One hand held the book in which he was utterly absorbed. In the other was the unwatched spoon, still

faithfully going round and round the pan, scattering gravy from hither to yon. A glance at the title of the book told me that Harry's Arctic explorations were over. He was now *Vagabonding Down the Andes*.

After dinner Harry rode out with us for the first time in a week, although we did not urge him to go. He is always keen to try anything new, no matter whether it is hard, easy, pleasant, or otherwise. Once he has done a thing, the thrill is over. Now that he has learned to ride easily, he rarely mounts a horse of his own accord. Since he is to be here only a short time and is of very little use to us, we usually let him stay at home with a book, which is the one thing he continues to enjoy.

Our work for the afternoon was to round-up the few 'cut-back' steers which had been rejected as too small in size when we sold cattle last spring. We have made arrangements to pasture this remnant of cattle in the *malpais* country, which is at a much lower altitude than our range. Weeds grow rankly there at the first hint of moist, spring weather, and on this green feed our shaggy mountain cattle will 'slick off' and look attractive to prospective buyers.

We entered the Home Pasture where the steers were being held, and Harry fastened the gate back against the fence so that it would be wide open when we returned, driving the cattle before us. Before Harry had remounted, out from the arroyo at our left came a large black cow and a red, white-faced, muley bull. Ignoring us entirely, they waddled fatly through the gate under the very noses of our horses and entered the water-lot as though they owned it.

'Mrs. Trouble and Keno!' I gasped.

'Did you put **THEM** in the pasture?' demanded Charlie hotly.

'Of course I didn't!' I retorted. 'Give me credit for having a little sense!'

'Then they must have broken in,' said Charlie. 'I'll bet the steers are all gone.'

Full of misgivings, we rode along the fence until we found where the wire had been broken. Luckily there had not been time for the steers to find the break. We rounded them up as we had planned and landed them safely in the corral where they were to spend the night.

'Where are you going to put Keno and Mrs. Trouble now?' asked Harry. We were giving him a sketch of their reprehensible characters while we repaired the pasture fence. 'Oh, turn them out on the range again to break something else, I suppose,' replied Charlie wearily. 'I wish we had a good tight jail.'

Mrs. Trouble is a very old milk cow, black and big-boned like her Galloway father; ornery and determined like her mother, Jersey Beauty. For many years Mrs. Trouble never failed to give us a calf, and each afternoon she was then obliged to return to the Home Ranch to suckle it and to be milked as well. She spent her nights imprisoned in corrals, her days within a short range from home. Last year, for the first time since she was two years old, she had no calf. With her chosen companion, Keno, a big, rampageous bull who shares her propensities, she took to the woods. For more than a year they have been roaming over the entire range with an utter disregard for fences. Several times they have wantonly 'spilled the beans' for us by running full tilt through a bunch of cattle that we were driving. Once, to give these devils their due, they co-operated with us in a scientific, agricultural experiment.

In addition to the river and the many living springs in Rucker Basin, we have five good wells, all within a short distance from Old Fort Rucker. Four of these are wells of water. The fifth is 'A well of English undefyed.' Into its arid depths are hurled the mail-order catalogues of yester-

year; the fiction magazines, which we have read; the multitude of pamphlets containing advice to farmers and stockmen, which we have not read. 'Thump! Thump! Thump!' Down to the bottom of this useful excavation fall the weighty tomes of Government statistics, sent us each year by Arizona's lone member of Congress. There they lie in their pristine brown-paper wrappings (marked 'Penalty for Private Use') to prove the old saying, 'Truth lies at the bottom of a well.'

On one occasion I was a little slow in thus disposing of a pamphlet whose writer had painted a glowing picture of the rosy future awaiting the stock-breeder who would raise his own corn and fatten his own cattle for the market. Charlie has no great reverence for the printed word, but this time he decided to act upon the advice showered upon him by a paternal Government. We had tried every other way we could think of to make money, so why not try this?

The land which we plant to hay each year is too much needed for that purpose for us to use any of it in an experiment with corn, but there is a little field near the Hermitage which had never produced a crop of any sort since we owned it. This clearing is not more than three acres in extent and is reached by means of a winding, rocky lane, hemmed in by trees. We have never tried to raise any hay there because the work involved would have been out of all proportion to the size of the hay crop. It would have been necessary to take apart both mower and horse-rake and transport them to the field by truck to avoid breaking them on rocks or stumps. After we had loaded the hay on the broad wain, half of it would have been torn from the load by the overhanging trees which border the narrow lane. In this unused field, my husband decided to experiment with corn in a very small scale. First he dashed down the canyon to get some Hickory King seed-corn from a neighbor. He then drove up

to the field in the truck to take the plow and planter; came back and got the work-team and walked back to the field, driving them before him, harnessed for the plow. His optimism was so contagious that I went about the kitchen singing at the top of my lungs,

‘Bringing in the sheaves, bringing in the sheaves,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.’

When the corn came up, we rode past the field often, pausing to look over the fence and admire the strong green stalks that were shooting up from the warm brown earth.

We made a long detour one afternoon on purpose to visit the corn patch. Charlie quoted from that pamphlet, whose advice he was following, while our horses stepped out briskly in a swift running-walk.

“‘Raise your own grain and fatten your own cattle.’ That’s the idea! I’ll bet you’ve been throwing away lots of good articles about farming and stock-raising,’ he continued reproachfully. ‘You don’t give me a chance to read them.’ His voice was full of agrarian discontent.

I bowed my guilty head over my horse’s mane, remembering those ponderous, unopened volumes at the bottom of the well and the lighter literature of the same ilk which had fluttered down to oblivion beside them.

We reached the little field in the midst of the forest. No longer could we call it a corn-patch. Instead of symmetrical rows of sturdy young plants, we saw long lines of green stumps, two or three inches high, while all over the trampled soil of the ravaged field were the betraying imprints of large cloven hoofs. Silently we rode about the field until we found a place in one corner where the fence had been broken. From that spot we easily trailed two sets of hoofprints to the river-bank, where lay Mrs. Trouble and her boon companion, Keno.

They did not pay us the compliment of rising as we approached. Mrs. Trouble looked up at us brazenly, chewing her cud with great gusto; while Keno's eyes wore the somnolent look of one who had dined richly and to repletion.

““Raise your own grain and fatten your own cattle,”” quoted Charlie wearily. ‘Well — I’ve done it.’

It is ever so much simpler to throw the pamphlets down the well in the first place.



X. WHERE NOTHING EVER HAPPENS

WHEN Alcario left us, one piece of fall work remained undone with which we should have been glad to have his help. The 'cut-back' steers had to be taken over to the Spear E Ranch where they were to winter. They were now eating the grass in the Home Pasture which we needed for the horses, and the sooner we moved them the better. There were not a great many of them, and three cowboys, counting me as one, could easily drive them to their new range. Counting Harry as one of the three made the undertaking more hazardous. On the previous occasions when he has been riding with us, no responsibility was placed upon him. When we now told him that we were really depending upon his help with the drive over the mountain, he showed more animation and interest than he had ever displayed before about anything.

We corralled the steers the night before the drive and fed them hay, so that they would travel well and not be contin-

ually stopping to snatch a mouthful of grass. We kept up our horses also to save time in the morning, and at daybreak we were out in the corral saddling up. It was then that Harry began to have a few misgivings and a distrust of his own prowess as a cowboy.

'Just — just what am I supposed to do?' he asked me as he was buckling his chaps.

'You have been over the trail and know where we are going,' I answered. 'You are to ride behind the bunch and keep up the drag. Don't crowd them, or they'll leave the trail — and don't let them get too far behind either.'

'What shall I do if they try to get away?' he inquired hopefully.

'Do nothing at all. Your job is to stay with the bunch. One of us will be on either flank and we'll bring back the ones that run.'

He looked disappointed upon hearing that. I knew that he had seen himself careering all over the landscape at full tilt, chasing the 'snakes' (the wild ones).

We mounted. Charlie rode in the lead, while Harry and I drove the cattle from the corral and through the gate to the South Pasture. There was water in the dirt tank just inside the pasture and the steers gathered around it to drink long, for they had been filling up on dry hay. After watering, they strung out along the trail, which is fenced on one side, and they stepped out at a brisk pace. At the top of a hill I turned them down a ravine, and, by the time the lead cattle reached the next gate, Charlie had opened it and was waiting outside in full view. He was ready to turn the cattle into a wide stock-drive-way that has been cut through the thick timber for a long distance. There were no more fences to help us. From now on it was 'everybody for himself and the devil take the hindmost.' Harry was the hindmost, and I halted to give him a last word of advice.

'If you don't know what to do, leave it to old Froggy. He was working cattle before you were born.'

It was upon Froggy's horse-sense that I pinned my faith as I flew to take my place at the left flank of the cattle.

A few of the steers had been born and raised on that part of the range through which we were now passing, and these now took the lead. Unfortunately for them, my husband and I knew the country as well as they, and each time they came abreast of an arroyo or a trail by which they meant to escape us, they found one of us blocking the way. When the cattle had been turned from the mouth of Cottonwood Canyon and were well started up the trail to the ridge between Tex Canyon and Rucker, we breathed easily for the first time. The memories of old days when we fought our way through the brush, racing, climbing, sliding, in the pursuit of madly running cattle, were still more real to us than the well-behaved, plodding animals sedately climbing the steep trail just ahead of us. They were safe enough at the moment, being at the bottom of a ravine, a high wall on either hand. They might scatter like quail when they came out on the wooded mesa at the summit. Through experience, we feared that they would scatter. Through inexperience, Harry was fearing that they would not. I realized that, from the stand-point of adventure, the drive so far had been disappointing.

Here was Harry Carter in the rugged Chiricahuas, famed for the fiercest of Apaches; riding a cowpony; driving a bunch of mountain cattle — and the Indians no longer gave the war-whoop; the pony did not pitch and the cattle made no break for liberty. All quite sufficient to account for the gloomy gaze which Harry fixed upon the tail of the last steer, behind which he rode at a snail's pace.

At the top of the ridge and on the far side of the mesa, there is a gate in the fence which separates our range from that of the Spear E's. Here we had planned that Harry and I should

guard the cattle while Charlie rode ahead to open the gate and then return to help us put the cattle through. It was a well-remembered, ticklish spot, where cattle have more than once got away from us in past years. Not so this time. There stood the gate, wide open, and at the edge of the mesa Lupe Ramirez was waiting for us. He is one of the Spear E cowboys, whom Frank Krentz had sent up the trail to meet us. Lupe must have slept in his boots and spurs in order to meet us that far from his home ranch.

When the cattle had filed through the gate and we were letting them rest and breathe after the long ascent, Charlie rode over to the knoll where Harry and I were waiting for the word to start on again.

'I don't think we'll need either of you any more,' said my husband. 'It's all downhill from here, and the cattle are traveling so well that Lupe and I can take them the rest of the way.'

'Good!' I exclaimed, glad enough to escape the long descent through Tex Canyon and the climb back. 'Good-bye — and good luck!'

Harry looked dazed. Gone was all chance of covering himself with glory. He had played his humble part well, but as yet he did not know it. He said not a word as he closed the gate behind us and followed me down the trail toward home.

'You did splendidly!' I declared, when the trail broadened and he was riding beside me.

'I didn't do anything,' he responded gloomily.

'Oh, yes, you did. If you hadn't been keeping up the drags, the cattle would have split into two bunches, and then we should have had all kinds of trouble.'

'Those steers!' he growled disgustedly. 'They had no life to them at all. It was just like shoving along a lot of sheep!'

'That's the way we want them,' I explained. 'It has taken us several years of hard work to gentle our cattle and breed

up the young ones so that we can handle them as we did today. You should have seen the ones we used to take through these mountains: wild, "snaky" cows and steers that bolted every time a rabbit crossed the trail.'

'I wish I had seen them,' said Harry morosely.

He rode on silently, and, since he is not a sullen boy, I knew that he was thinking deeply. I said no more, remembering that Charlie Rak, as a boy, regretted not having been born in time to fight the Indians.

We had steak for our lunch, in addition to the sandwiches which we had carried on our saddles and brought home again.

'If you and Mr. Rak don't care, I think I'd like to go home as soon as he comes back,' announced Harry when we had finished eating our meal in silence.

'Of course you may go whenever you like,' I answered. 'If you are not happy here, we should not want to keep you.'

'Oh, I've been happy enough,' he conceded — 'while everything was new. Now it is just the same old thing over and over. Nothing ever happens on a cow-ranch, and it isn't the least bit like I expected it to be.'

Three days later, he left us. We wonder if — in spirit — he was ever really here.



XI. ALICE HENDERSON

NEAR our house is a one-room adobe cabin, which was that of the commanding officer when Old Camp Rucker was a military post. It is a pleasant place in which to lodge a man or two in warm weather. In winter, it is less comfortable, and I had given Harry the one guest-room within the house, where he might have a fire each night in the little wood-stove. The room was now free, and I was very glad, since a letter came from dear Alice Henderson on the very day of his departure. She was on her way to New Orleans from California and could stop off here to visit us if we wanted her.

Of course we wanted her!

I kindled a fire in the guest-room and spent an afternoon refurbishing it; putting on the floor a hooked rug and on the bed a candlewick spread which I had been making in the evenings. When the guest-room was in order, we had supper and went to bed early. I woke the next morning in our small bedroom, from which I could look into the even smaller dining-room and adjoining kitchen; then I blinked and rubbed

my eyes, for I had been having my recurrent dream of a mansion, complete with ballroom and conservatories.

As the dream-house faded, I rose very contentedly, thinking, 'I'm glad I haven't all those rooms to clean, and imagine washing all those windows!' Still, it would be convenient to open a door, as I often do in my dream, and find luxurious bedrooms all ready for our guests, instead of rushing around to make cot beds in the bear-grass hut and adobe cabin, when people arrive unexpectedly.

I saw my dream-house once in waking hours. I was walking home from school when our grocer, who was also our neighbor, drove up to the curb and hailed me.

'I am going to the Graham place,' he said. 'Would you like to go with me? We'll be back in an hour.'

Mr. Earl cramped the wheel of his high buggy and I jumped in beside him. The Graham place was the home of a multi-millionaire mining man who had aimed at aristocratic seclusion, and, after achieving it, roamed the world in search of companionship. Because the spacious grounds were surrounded by a high wall, guarded by a lodge-keeper, the place had a fascination for boys and girls who could see only the white pinnacles of the roof gleaming among the trees.

As the horse trotted up the winding, graveled drive, Mr. Earl explained that the absentee owner of the place paid him for going to the house twice a week to make sure that the servants were attending to their duties. When we reached the door, I found that this meant an inspection of the entire house from cellar to attic.

We opened doors, doors, doors, to rooms untenanted; saw great mahogany beds with silken spreads that had not been turned back for years; long, polished tables about which none gathered; conservatories entered only by gardeners. There were rooms devoted to books, billiards, pictures; satin-walled boudoirs, whose mirrors reflected only the faces of the maids

who polished them; a ghostly, gilded ballroom, with polished maple floor, ringed about by chairs cushioned in pale blue satin.

I like our little house better. Negrito barks when he sees himself in a mirror, and I could not let Robles curl up in a pale blue satin chair.

I was waiting on the station platform in Douglas when the train arrived from California and Alice Henderson got out. She is a small, vivacious woman with sparkling eyes, the blackest of black. She does not allow her high spirits to be dampened by the thought that she is now a grandmother.

‘Do you know of any trouble that you can lead me into?’ she demanded as we walked to our automobile.

I glanced at the distant mountains in which we must be before the end of the short December day. We might find plenty of trouble on the road, but I doubted if that were the sort she meant.

‘What kind of trouble?’ I inquired.

‘Oh, any kind,’ said she. ‘My son Jim tried his best to keep me from stopping off to visit you. He said that we were both the same kind of crazy women and you would be sure to lead me into trouble. I’d hate to disappoint him.’

‘We won’t. Just give me time,’ I said as we got into the car.

‘Isn’t Douglas a border town?’ she suggested. ‘Aren’t they having one of their revolutions in Mexico so that we could be shot — or something?’

‘No chance,’ I answered, ‘but we might go over to Agua Prieta, the Mexican town just across the line, and have lunch there.’

‘Fine!’ she exclaimed.

‘I warn you it will be tame in daytime. There is never any excitement until night.’

'It won't sound tame when I write Jim about it,' she chuckled. 'Just show me the local color and my imagination will provide the thrills.'

There were no formalities to be observed at the border for people who were merely visiting Agua Prieta, but I did have to empty the car of Alice's luggage and the packages of groceries with which I had filled the back before her train arrived. Otherwise we should have had to open them for the customs inspectors of Mexico upon going and of the United States upon returning from our half-mile journey.

Fred Carson let us pile our cargo in a corner of his service station, and in ten minutes we were in Mexico. In ten more we had driven through all that there is of Agua Prieta and stopped before the door of the *café* which, at night, offers the most entertainment. We took ten steps inside. It was empty. In one corner stood a silent piano and a few music-stands. There was an expanse of polished dance-floor, surrounded by unoccupied tables. Paper decorations, left from the last *fiesta*, drooped mournfully from wall and ceiling. There was not even a waiter.

"Some banquet hall deserted,"' quoted Alice. 'Can't we go somewhere else, where it's livelier?'

'They'll all be like this at noon,' I said, 'and the food is good here.'

'If there is any food,' said Alice.

There was food. It had to be cooked to order, and we chose fish, which is a treat to me, now that we live so far from the sea. This fish was fresh, having just come up from the Bay of Guaymas.

'I couldn't stretch this out to make a whole letter,' Alice admitted when lunch was over.

We found some picture postcards in a little curio shop and she mailed one to her son from the post-office in Agua Prieta.

'We are lunching in romantic Old Mexico,' she wrote.
'Oh, land of *fandangos* and *fiestas*!'

'That will keep him stirred up for a while,' she said as we drove back to Arizona.

We collected our luggage and groceries, had the tank filled with gas, and started for home. Our trip to Mexico had consumed time that should have been spent on the trip to Rucker. In the shortest days of the year, it is dark in our canyon a little after five o'clock in the afternoon, and I wanted to get home as early as possible for fear that Charlie would become uneasy about us.

The car behaved beautifully; not a puncture, or a rattle, or one of those 'funny noises in the engine' that are the despair of women drivers generally. As we entered the mouth of the canyon and passed the schoolhouse, I turned on the lights. We had passed through the ranges of the OK's and UK Bars, when one of the headlights went out. Just like that! There was nothing I could do about it. The road was winding now, and it was impossible to see ahead more than a few feet. I had always supposed that both lights of a car glare straight ahead, except when they are modestly lowered upon meeting another car on a narrow road. I was wrong — or else our car differs from others. The one light that remained was looking around the corner to the right. When the road turned to the left, we drove into darkness.

'What will you do if the other light goes out, too?' asked Alice. There was no trace of anxiety in her tone. She was enjoying herself.

'I'll stop wherever I am and wait for the moon to rise,' I answered. 'I can drive a cross-eyed car, but I won't try to drive a blind one.'

In the eerie light of our one lamp, we slowly crept up the canyon; now and then splashing through the river, whose windings we were following; threading our way among jun-

pers and oaks. Then a swift ascent, the barking of dogs, and Charlie's shout of welcome.

Alice's enthusiasm was a delight to both of us after Harry's apathy. She had never been on a cattle-ranch before, and the simplest things she saw or did gave her a keen pleasure. She had not been on a horse since her girlhood, when she had learned to ride on a side-saddle. The day before she left, she mounted the trustworthy little *Æohippus* and we all rode over to the Yellow Rocks, where we were to take her picture. Over her borrowed riding-breeches she wore a pair of chaps. Charlie's most picturesquely battered Stetson hat was pulled down over her hair. We posed her among jagged rocks and tilted the camera so that in the picture she would look as though she were on the 'jumping-off place.' She will send the picture to her son Jim and we are to hear what he says.

On the way back to the ranch, the sedate pace of *Æohippus* became too slow for her. Like all other tenderfeet, she wanted to gallop, while we never urge a horse to run unless our work demands it. She hit him a clip with her spurless heels and he responded by trotting, the up-and-down, bone-racking, 'buggy-trot' that he resorts to upon such occasions. She pulled him down to a walk.

'Doesn't this horse know how to lope?' she asked, after vainly trying again to make him do it.

'Of course he does,' I replied.

'Then why won't he?' and she gave him another dig with her heels — to no avail.

We had a note from her, written on the train, New Orleans bound. It closed with a rhyme:

'Give my love to Robles.
Negrito's well, I hope.
No messages at all I send
To the horse who wouldn't lope.'



XII. 'KETCH MY SADDLE!'

IT HAS been hard to sell cattle this fall. The rains did not begin as early as they should in California, and feeders there dared not restock their pastures until they were sure of grass. Now their belated rainy season is under way and buyers are coming to Arizona to look for 'feeder stuff.'

A day or so after Alice Henderson left us, Frank Krentz telephoned to ask Charlie if he would sell to a California buyer some of the cattle which we had pastured on the Spear E Ranch. The Krentzes were selling some of their own at this time and all the cattle could be rounded-up and shipped together. The next morning Charlie rode away to be gone a week or more, gathering and shipping cattle from Bernardino Station.

No sooner had he gone than I heard a terrific clamor from the remarkable collection of odds and ends of metal that furnishes the power for Santiago's car. Other than asking it to go at all, Santiago does not demand the impossible of his

car. He does not expect it to take him to town in a single day, and it has been known to take three. He had received his pay for cutting and hauling the fence-posts on his last contract and now planned to spend it on town pleasures. While his going would leave me entirely alone on the ranch, I did not care in the least. I have often been here alone both day and night and know that I should not feel half so comfortable and secure if we lived in a valley, within view of the highway.

There is one big advantage to living in Rucker Basin, at the end of Somewhere, on the road to Nowhere. Present-day outlaws travel by automobile and are hardly likely to venture into a canyon to which there is only one 'bottle-neck' entrance and exit.

Once we read in the newspaper that a dangerous outlaw, escaped from the penitentiary at Florence, was supposed to be wandering afoot in our mountains, and all ranchers were warned to look out for him. It was quite unlikely that the man would molest me, provided I fed him, but I feared what he might do if Charlie happened to ride in from the range unexpectedly. I studied over this until I had an idea, which I proudly divulged to Charlie as brilliant and original.

'I'll pretend to be cleaning house while he is here. I'll throw a Navajo rug out on the terrace, and when you see that you can ride down to Mr. Heyne's and telephone for the officers.'

'Every old-timer in the Southwest knows that trick,' laughed my husband. 'Only the women usually throw a patchwork quilt on the fence to warn their menfolks to keep out of sight.'

Two horse thieves from New Mexico once wandered into Rucker Basin, undoubtedly intending to cross the Chiricahuas from east to west. Unfortunately for them, a heavy snow, rapidly melting under a hot sun, kept the river in full

flood for several days and they were unable to ford it. Charlie Rak picked up the trail of two strange, shod horses and followed it until it left our range. Other ranchers trailed them likewise, and officers easily caught the men when hunger drove them down to the populated valley of San Simón. Since then we have been untroubled until quite recently, when an outbreak of saddle thefts has excited every rancher in the countryside.

Every cowboy who works on a round-up has a string of horses in his mount — but only one saddle. He can ill-afford to lose that or see it torn up by a frightened, riderless horse. So when a man is accidentally thrown by a falling horse, or is pitched off purposely, he yells at the top of his lungs, 'Ketch my saddle!'

When saddles began disappearing from our neighborhood, the sheriff responded quickly to the yells of the despoiled cowboys, but the saddles were not 'ketched.'

The first saddle stolen in this vicinity was taken from Moore's ranch one night not long ago. The Moores had just finished building a fine new barn, and, when it was completed, Dan Taylor said, 'I am going to be the first one to use the new saddle-rack.' He hung up his saddle, and the very next morning it was gone. On that same night a saddle was stolen from the OK's barn. Similar thefts followed in quick succession, and in each case it was evident that the thieves must have looked over the premises by day in order to know exactly where to locate the saddles in the darkness. Across the mountains in the Paradise neighborhood, five saddles were stolen in one night. It was assumed that they were being smuggled into Old Mexico and sold there, where a tariff on all goods made of leather had made them particularly valuable. A fine stock-saddle, elaborately stamped, is worth a good deal anywhere.

On the first night that Charlie was away, I fed the milk

cows in the shed and filled their manger with hay. I was just about to close the barn door so that the cows could not get at the grain sacks, when I noticed my own saddle alone on the rack. Charlie was using his, and we had already put away under lock and key the ones that had been used by Alcario and Harry. Mine is a regular cowboy saddle, 'boy's size.' It is sheepskin-lined, and the skirts and stirrup leathers are deeply embossed. It is awkward to carry for one who is unable to grab it by the horn and swing it jauntily over one shoulder as the men do. I fetched the wheelbarrow, padded it with my Navajo saddle-blanket, and in it I trundled to the house my chaps and bridle and the precious saddle. I dragged them all inside the house and put the saddle to bed on the floor of the guest-room.

There was already a fire on the hearth in the living-room and it seemed altogether too much trouble to kindle another in the kitchen stove just to cook supper for myself. I gave the dogs their bowls of bread and milk, then I put a shovel-ful of glowing coals under a little saucepan at one side of the wide hearth and thus boiled water for tea; meanwhile, holding slices of bread over the coals on a long fork until they were a well-toasted, golden brown. After eating, I settled down to a long evening with a book. Blanco cat was in my lap; Robles and Negrito slept on the hearth-rug.

While a surprising number of people find their way to Old Camp Rucker by daylight, it is very rare that anyone arrives here after dark, unless he has lost his way. Even then the approach of a visitor is heralded by horn and headlight.

My heart stopped when the evening's peace was suddenly shattered by a loud, imperative rapping on the door. I dared not open it and let the dogs surge forth to terrify some inoffensive, benighted wayfarer. Instead, I drew back the window curtain which, for a wonder, was screening me from view, and tapped upon the window-pane as my response

to the knocking. A man came close to the window, and I could dimly make out two other figures behind him. I shouted an inquiry above the clamor of the excited dogs.

‘Who are you?’

‘We came to buy some wood,’ yelled the man by the window.

‘You want to buy wood at nine o’clock at night?’ I said doubtingly.

‘We were working and couldn’t get away from town earlier.’

It sounded reasonable. I did not in the least wish to go out in the cold and darkness to measure off cordwood in the ricks. On the other hand, ‘money talks’ with a very persuasive tongue. Four dollars and a half for a cord of wood is real, honest-to-goodness wealth. Perhaps they would even buy two cords, and then I should have all of nine dollars at once. It is understood that I have the spending of the money when I sell the wood myself.

‘Wait there until I come out,’ I shouted to the men, and dashed into my bedroom for a coat and knitted gloves. The dogs rushed after me. I lured them into the guest-room and left them in there with the saddle. They were raging when they realized how they had been tricked and imprisoned.

Outside three men awaited me, muffled in overcoats, collars turned up, hats pulled down over their eyes. Without turning the flashlight directly into their faces, I could not possibly distinguish their features. I walked ahead with my flashlight and piloted them to the ricks, which were at some distance from our house, in front of the old Fort. In the gloom I located their car, standing beneath a great oak tree.

‘Is that the only truck you have?’ I asked, turning to the men who were following me closely.

‘Why — yes’m,’ said their spokesman.

It was what we and our Mexicans called a *truckicito*, a small car, built for delivering packages around a town. The prospect of selling nine dollars' worth of wood — or even four and a half — had gone a-glimmering.

'You can't haul a cord of wood in this thing,' I said shortly.

'No'm we can't,' agreed the man who had thus far done all the talking for the three. 'We reckoned on buying a quarter of a cord.'

'I won't tear up a rick to sell as little as that,' I declared.

'Will you sell half a cord?'

'I don't want to bother with it,' I replied, 'but you have come a long way and I'll let you have half a cord this time.'

The three men drew together a few paces from me. All hands searched their several pockets; there was much counting and calculation, at the end of which two dollars and a quarter were put into my hands in the form of 'chicken feed.' It was becoming very evident, even to my unsuspecting mind, that these men had not journeyed forty miles with the sole aim and end of purchasing cordwood. As I went to the nearest rick, flashlight in hand, I passed close behind the little truck. In the back of it, nearly filling the cargo space, was an enormous wooden packing-case, covered by a lid which had been lightly tacked on with half-driven nails.

'How do you expect to carry wood with that big box in your truck, taking up all the room?' I asked.

For an instant they seemed at a loss for a reply, then a new voice answered me. !

'We just happened to find the box somewhere, lady, so we threw it in the car and brought it along.'

The last speaker leaped into the car, lifted the packing-case and the others helped to take it off and put it under a tree. With my four-foot stick, I measured the wood and told them to begin loading. It was rather doubtful if they could get even a half-cord on their truck. I need not remain

there in the cold to watch them load. Besides that, I had a sudden, urgent desire to get away from these men. I could not return too soon to the four stout walls of our house; back to the savage barks of our dogs. Something now told me that I should never have left either walls or dogs — not to mention the telephone and the double-barreled gun loaded with buckshot.

'I am going back to the house,' I said, as the first sticks of wood were thrown into the truck. 'In half an hour I shall turn out my dogs. You were very lucky that they were inside when you came. They might have torn you to pieces.'

All this by way of discouraging another visit which I by no means anticipated.

The dogs were extravagantly glad to be freed from their imprisonment. They scratched furiously at the doors, whining to be allowed to go outside, but I kept them in until I heard the truck drive away. The more I thought of these men, the more preposterous their behavior seemed. They could have bought that small quantity of wood in town for little more than the cost of their trip out here.

The next morning everything was explained. All of the barn doors were swinging wide open, so left by my visitors in their vain search for saddles. The packing-box, which they had left under the tree, was perfectly adapted to concealing stolen saddles while the car was on the road. Possibly these men had a guilty fear that they were under suspicion and thought it a wise precaution to fetch a load of wood to town to account for their night trip. Three men have since been arrested for smuggling stolen goods into Mexico, and I like to believe that they were my visitors.

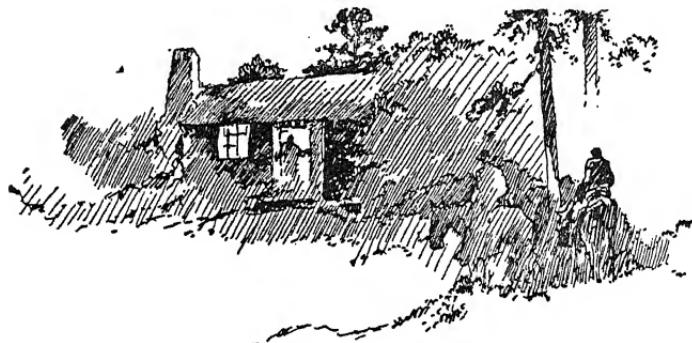
On his return, Charlie treated me to a long lecture on the folly of leaving my fireside, dogs, six-shooter and shotgun, to go prowling around in the dark, selling cordwood to outlaws.

‘You haven’t the sense that God gave a road-runner!’ he concluded.

Anyone who has driven down an Arizona road behind one of those skittering, imbecile birds knows how little sense that is.

‘Those men might have batted you on the head and taken everything on the place!’

‘Pooh!’ I cried. ‘They didn’t even ketch my saddle!’



XIII. 'LIGHT AND STOP, STRANGER!'

CHARLIE'S lecture on my foolhardiness sank in. Particularly I minded being compared with that feckless bird, the road-runner. The fact that the witless fowl usually escapes disaster by the length of a tail-feather made the comparison no more flattering. I resolved to cultivate prudence — which has not been one of my outstanding characteristics up to now. I am by no means fearless. I can be as scared as anyone. I tremble; my teeth chatter; my knees wobble, and I am 'all of a twitter.' The trouble is that I do not have these manifestations until the danger is all over. Until the visit of the saddle thieves, never before had strangers come along at night when I was alone. The next time I should know what to do, and I sincerely hoped I need never do it.

Charlie started for Douglas one morning when the wintry sky was dark and threatening. The roads were heavy with mud, and, since he could not possibly attend to his business

and return to Rucker before dark, he reluctantly decided to remain in town overnight.

It was almost bedtime when I suddenly felt cold and realized that the fire on the hearth had burned to ashes while I was absorbed in a book. As I did not wish to rebuild that fire, I moved into the warm kitchen, where coals still glowed in the cook-stove. Robles and Negrito stretched themselves out on the floor. The uncurtained windows were black squares against the white walls of the lamplit room.

‘Whoo hoo! Whoo hoo!’

A cry from the blackness outside. I might have thought it a freak of the wind had the dogs not leaped from their slumber to drown the cry with their yelping.

‘Whoo hoo! Whoo hoo!’

I quieted the dogs, opened the window, and answered the hail. In the unlikely event that those three men had come back again after half a cord of wood, I was prepared to give them a cold reception.

‘What is it?’ I demanded. I was Prudence personified.

‘Kin we git to stay all night?’ spoke a man’s voice, nasal, drawling.

‘Who are you? How many are you?’

‘My name’s Haggerty. There’s jest me and my boy.’

‘In a car or on horseback?’ I asked, intending to harden my heart to a strange motorist, no matter what his plight.

‘Horseback,’ he answered patiently.

‘Ride up to the window, then, and let me see you.’

It is a part of the tradition of the Southwest that a horseman does not dismount before a strange house unless he is invited to do so. Dimly I could distinguish them as they obeyed. A tall man and a smaller figure, both mounted. At the sight of the horses, my resolve to be prudently inhospitable went into the discard.

Warning the riders not to dismount, I put on a warm coat,

took my flashlight, and went outside, followed by the dogs, who were also mollified by the sight of horses. The men rode after me to the barn, turned the horses into a corral, fed them grain and threw a few forkfuls of hay into a manger. When we were all back in the warm house, I built up the fire, made a pan of biscuits, a pot of coffee, and heated some stewed meat which had been left from dinner.

They ate hungrily. Haggerty was a lanky, middle-aged man, with a long, narrow, lined face, faded blue eyes, and thin, mouse-colored hair. Judging by the calloused palms of his gnarled hands, he was a worker. The gangling boy of fourteen had been made in his father's mould. Both wore dark wool trousers tucked into worn riding-boots, 'booger-red' canvas jumpers over gray sweaters of heavy weave, wide-brimmed hats of gray felt, the tall crowns pinched to a peak. Once or twice the timid boy looked up at me and cleared his throat as though he had half a mind to speak. Then he bowed his head over his plate again, flushing, the words unuttered.

'We done rode all the way from Skeleton Canyon today,' the father told me.

From one ranch to another they had inquired their way. At the last stop they had been told how to reach us, but the trail was so brushy and the night so dark that they had lost sight of the telephone wire, which should have guided them. Had it not been for our lighted window, they might have spent the long winter night in the dripping, sodden forest, hungry, hovering over a smoldering fire of wet wood.

'We'd like to git an early start in the morning,' said Haggerty, as I was showing them where they were to sleep. 'We're heading over San Pedro River way.'

That is all I ever learned about them. I do not know where they live.

They ate their breakfast by yellow lamplight, after which

I walked over to the corrals with them so the dogs would allow them to open the barn door and get their saddles. They were ready to go by the time that they could see the road by the cold, pale light that outlined the mountains in the east. They mounted and looked down upon me from their tall, rangy horses.

‘Thank you for making chocolate for me, ’special,’ stammered the boy.

The father made the traditional farewell of this country. Sweeping his broad hat from his head, he said, ‘Well, goodbye. Any time you are over our way, stop in and see us.’

Naturally, I anticipated another lecture upon Charlie’s return. With deprecating air and a profusion of extenuating circumstances, I confessed to him that I had fed two total strangers and given them lodging for the night.

‘I just couldn’t send them away in the cold and darkness, on tired horses,’ I concluded.

‘Well! I should say you couldn’t!’ he replied, indignant at the mere suggestion. ‘There’s only one thing to say at a time like that. Give them the old invitation of the Southwest, “Light and stop.”’

So I really had acted with prudence after all.



XIV. A BROKEN RULE

JANUARY is the month in which the cowmen of the Southwest have their nearest approach to a vacation.

Our cattle are grazing on the range while the cattlemen of the frozen, snow-covered Northwestern States are having to feed hay to their herds. On the cattle ranges in the mountains of southern Arizona the snow remains on the ground only a few days at a time. While the grass is blanketed in white, our cattle browse upon oak, mountain mahogany, and Apache plume, and we rejoice because we need not spend the winter 'punching cows with a pitchfork.' In midwinter there are no screw-worms to trouble us, no pinkeye, no lightning. Every calf has long since been branded. The old cows and the steers have been sold and shipped for beef or to the feed-lots. When it rains or snows, we can sit by a blazing hearth-fire and enjoy the promise of water and feed for the spring.

Our old neighbor in John Long Canyon, Tom Hudson, used to speak of this or that neglected job as something he

had 'saved up to do while it is snowing.' At all times of year Charlie has clipped to the big calendar a long slip of paper which he calls his 'Do List.' On it are written the things which he plans to accomplish in the odd hours which might otherwise be his leisure. There are gates to repair, harnesses to mend, letters to be written. When he completes one of these tasks and is crossing it off the list, he always thinks of two more to write down. Sometimes we talk of a time when we shall abandon work for a space; 'loaf and invite our souls.' Thus far that time has never come and our souls are still waiting for the invitation.

Before I became a ranchwoman, I used to wonder why so many wives of farmers and stockmen devoted every spare moment to making patchwork, hooked rugs, or braided mats. Now I know. After cooking meals that are quickly devoured, washing dishes that are soiled three times a day, cleaning rooms which must be swept again on the morrow, we like to make something tangible and lasting which will give us the pleasant sense of accomplishment. When that urge seizes me, I too cut pieces of bright cloth into little bits and sew them together into patterns, or hook strips of old silk stockings through burlap to make a rug, working as hard as my grandmother, a farmer's wife, did before me.

Early in February we looked for Alcario, who had promised to come back in time to help us with the weaning. All the calves, the ones which would be yearlings in the spring, must now be separated from their mothers, corralled and fed until they ceased to bawl. We do this every year, partly to let the cows go dry for a while before their new calves are born; partly to teach the young animals how to eat cotton-seed cake from a trough and hay from a manger, to drink from a watering-trough, and look after themselves when they are no longer following their mothers. To wean in our fashion means riding in every part of our range to find the calves

and gather a bunch of them at one time. When these have been fed in the corral for about ten days or two weeks, they are turned out on a part of the range where they cannot find their mothers. Then another bunch of calves is gathered, and so on until all have been weaned.

We went in to Douglas to see Señora Felipa Rincon, the mother of Alcario, whom all the Mexicans address respectfully as Doña Felipa. Her neat little house is on the Calle Internacional, from which she looks through the barbed-wire fence which is all that lies between her and Mexico. While she is pure Indian, and proud of it, there is nothing in her appearance to remind one of the usual squat, shapeless, elderly squaw. She looks more like an aged arrogant chief. She is a very tall, straight, lean woman of sixty, whose hair is still black beneath the gay head-cloth which she wears about her head, turban-wise. Upon looking at her, one can see from whom Ofelia inherited her eyes.

Doña Felipa was very angry with her son Alcario. She had not heard a word from him since he and his family left for the Salt River Valley, and he had promised that he would bring the children to her for a few days' visit before returning to our ranch. She showed us the two little beds that she had all ready for Maria Appolonia and Ofelia; the presents she had bought for them.

‘My son is *loco*’ (crazy), she declared angrily, ‘and his wife is just as bad. They want to be going to some new place all the time.’

We inquired here and there for men who had worked for us at other times and found none available. Dolores was working on Slaughter's Ranch. José Nuñez, who often helps us temporarily, was plowing for a farmer near Elfrida. Since we were unable to find a man who knew our range, we decided that weaning time was too near at hand to break in a new vaquero, and we went to work ourselves, riding con-

stantly. No word from Alcario came to Doña Felipa or to us.

It was the first week of March by the time the last of the weaner calves were bawling in the corrals, and their mothers, outside the gate, were answering unceasingly, until the Home Ranch was a bedlam by day and night. On the range we had also found a few three-year-old heifers, to whom calves had been born very early. These heifers we brought home, intending to feed them for a month or so, to give a good start to both the calves and their young mothers.

'This is a good day for me to fetch in all the horses from the range and shoe those that need it,' said Charlie Rak one noon. He had been looking over his 'Do List,' and this was the most important item on it. It was not necessary for me to go with him, as he could easily bring in the horses without help.

'Now is my chance to catch up with the ironing,' said I.

I walked with him to the barn, and while he was saddling Art, he told me in which part of the range he intended to ride in search of the horses. Because the country over which we ride is so large, rugged, and wooded, we have made it a rule of the ranch that one who starts off alone on horseback must always tell someone at home in which direction he is going. If the lone rider has an accident and does not come home within a reasonable time, we then know which way to start when we begin looking for him.

Charlie led his horse from the corral and mounted. Nearby us, the milk cows were lying on the ground in the sunshine, chewing their cud. They were a picture of ease and contentment, so stuffed with hay that they felt no need to go out to the pasture to graze.

'I must have spring fever,' said Charlie. 'I feel as though I should like to lie around and doze, or read, for a whole month and not do another thing.'

Casting a last, envious glance at the lazy cows, their owner rode away.

I finished the ironing and attended to some other household matters that had long needed doing. I have no list. Jobs await me wherever I look. Presently it occurred to me that for some time I had not visited the vacant house of our vaquero, which is on the bank of the creek we call Little Rucker, hidden from our view by trees. I went over to see if the doors were still closed and how the roof was standing the weather. Returning to our own house by a roundabout way, I found in the outer corral a bunch of our saddle horses, which Charlie had evidently left there. I expected him to be in the barn, unsaddling, or in the house, but he was nowhere in evidence.

An hour later, I heard his shout from the water-lot, 'Mary! Mary!' In the cry there was an urgency which sent me to the gate as fast as I could go.

'Don't run!' he shouted as soon as he saw me. He always declares that I 'run like a duck' and he is afraid I'll hit my toe on a rock and fall. I found him on his horse, bending over the saddle-horn which he was clutching with one hand. He was hatless and his eyes were bright with pain.

'You are hurt!' I cried.

'Never mind that now!' he yelled. 'Open the gate to the outer corral and let Jerry out. Quick — before he breaks out!'

Leaning over the gate which separated him from the horses in the front corral was the great stallion, Jerry. I had taken only a few steps in his direction when there was an ominous creak — a crash — and the splintered boards were rent as Jerry broke the heavy lumber gate squarely in the middle and rushed out to the other horses with an exultant battle-cry, 'Wheeeeeee!' There was nothing I could do about it. I turned back to my husband.

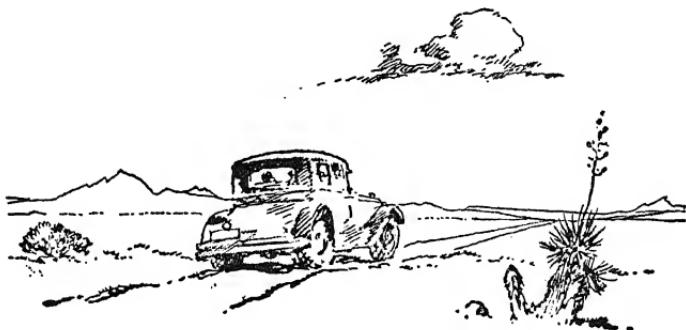
‘Where are you hurt?’ I demanded anxiously.

‘It’s my leg. I must ride clear over to the house.’

He rode slowly along the footpath ahead of me, still holding to the saddle-horn over which he crouched, his bare head bowed. My husband — who is ever erect and carries his head high. He halted the horse beside the front door.

‘How badly are you hurt?’ I quavered.

‘Mary,’ he answered, ‘my leg is broken.’



XV. OFF TO THE HOSPITAL

I LOOKED up at the six-foot man on the tall horse. Surely, with a broken leg, he could not dismount unaided.

'How can I help you get off that horse and into the house?' I asked anxiously.

'Bring me that old mop of yours, the one with the long handle,' he suggested. 'I'll use it as a crutch.'

I scurried around to the back of the house. The mop was an old one, no longer in use, and it took me some time to find it. When I returned, Charlie was off the horse, standing on one leg and leaning against the house. While I was away, he had swung his broken right leg across the back of the horse, taken the left foot from the stirrup, and lowered himself to the ground. As though that feat, which would have satisfied most men, were not enough for him, he had unsaddled and unbridled his horse and turned him loose. With the mop turned upside down for a crutch and his free left hand resting on my shoulder, he managed to get into the

house and sank down on the couch beneath the window. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead.

'Bring me a little of that old wine,' he said through pain-drawn lips.

The color returned to his face after he drank a glass of the fine old sherry which we had kept for such emergencies. He opened the long sharp knife-blade that he uses for ear-marking calves and began cutting the stitches of the seam on each side of his riding-boot. His leg was broken below the knee, and he thought the heavy leather of the high boottop might be bound around tightly to serve as a splint.

Meanwhile, I had gone to the telephone. Each cattle ranch in our neighborhood has its own particular call, and to get a neighbor, one twists a little handle at the side of the telephone box attached to the wall. The Moores did not answer, nor the Meadows. George Winkler and Vic Daniel were at home and both promised to start for our ranch immediately. Beyond helping Charlie into a more comfortable position on the couch, with his broken leg stretched out beside the good one, I could do nothing else for him, and I packed his bag with things he might need in the hospital.

'How did you manage to get back on your horse after you fell?' I asked, when Charlie began to look a little more like himself.

'I didn't fall, and I was never off my horse,' he answered. 'When I brought home the other horses, I shouted to you and you didn't answer.'

'I must have been over at Alcario's house.'

'I wanted to let you know that I was going up to the beef pasture to see if Jerry needed shoes, but when you didn't answer me, I went, anyway. It was such a short distance that it didn't seem worth while to hunt for you to tell you.'

'You broke your own rule!' said I, with a shiver.

'Jerry is barefooted,' he continued. 'I brought him as far as the upper gate of the Home Pasture on the way home. When I got off to close the gate, Jerry started grazing on the hillside. I rode up a little too close behind him and he kicked at my horse — but he hit my leg instead. The only thing I could do was to stay in the saddle and get home somehow, for you would not have known where to look for me.'

When George Winkler arrived, we found that he had brought with him Mr. Adams, who had served in the hospital corps during the war and knew how to make a proper splint. At his request I fetched an orange box from which he cut strips of thin wood. Then he took off Charlie's boot. It was full of blood. We knew then that a splintered bone had pierced the flesh. Without disturbing the trouser leg or underwear, Mr. Adams bound the splints into place with rolls of bandage, of which I keep a great supply. Everything possible had been done by the time Vic Daniel arrived from his ranch in John Long Canyon. As the Daniel car was the more comfortable one, he offered to take Charlie to Douglas. One man held up the injured leg, Charlie put his arms around the shoulders of a man at either hand, and was finally seated in the back of the automobile. I put in a box, topped with a cushion for the leg to rest upon. More cushions and the bag were wedged on either side so the leg could not be moved or jolted as he sat crossways in the back seat. Charlie smiled at me as the car started, and I made a sorry attempt at smiling back. When he was out of sight, I winked back the tears that I refused to shed and turned to the work that awaited me.

Mr. Winkler had asked if there was anything that I wanted them to do for me, and there was plenty. He and Mr. Adams helped me cut the cattle in the corral into two bunches so that I could feed them later. They took a little-used gate

from its hinges and with it replaced the gate Jerry had broken. All the horses which had been brought in from the range were now allowed to go free, Jerry with them. Horse-shoeing is something I have never tackled.

There was another thing I had never tried to do and for a reason that seemed good and sufficient to me. I had never milked a cow. From the experience of other ranchwomen I had learned that a woman who can milk has to do it very frequently. When the men ride off before sunup, they are quite apt to say, 'We haven't time to milk this morning' — and she does it. When they return, possibly after dark, they are surprised if they find that she has not done the milking. I have declined to learn how, and it has not mattered because the cow always has a calf that is only too glad to save me the trouble. Now it was a different matter. Mrs. Finnie, a big Holstein milk cow, who gives an enormous amount of milk, had a day-old calf that could not absorb one fourth of the milk that distended the mother's udder. Mr. Adams milked her for me, and offered to come back the next day to milk again if I needed his help.

While all these things were being done, I made repeated trips back to the house, trying to get the Meadows at the OK's on the telephone, and finally succeeded. They have a switch which connects them with the Forest Service line, and, in a roundabout way through Rodeo, New Mexico, a telephone message can be sent to Douglas. Soon I was relieved to know that Doctor Collins had been reached and would be ready to receive Charlie as soon as he arrived at the hospital.

Before I turned away from the telephone, it rang again. This time it was Frank Moore. He had heard of Charlie's accident and was anxious to do something to help. He met Mr. Daniel's car not far from the forks of the road and Charlie had asked Mr. Moore to go to Elfrida in the morning

and try to get José Nuñez and bring him up here to help me. If José could not come, Mr. Moore said that he would keep on looking until he found someone else who would come.

It was dark when the neighbors left and I came into the lonely house. It was strewn with pieces of orange box, bandage covers, and mud that had been tracked in. Beside the couch was Charlie's boot, still damp from his blood. More than once in my life I have been grateful that work left me no time for worrying or weeping. That was one of the times. I picked up the things on the floor and swept; replaced the garments that were lying on beds and chairs, just as I had left them while packing the bag. I baked bread for the dogs and made tea for myself; brought out my mending-basket and repaired the clothes that I had ironed that afternoon. (It seemed incredible that it was only that afternoon!) A little after nine o'clock I was called to the telephone once more. It was Mr. Meadows.

'I was on my way to your house when I met Vic Daniel, taking Charlie to town,' said he. 'I turned around and left my car at home and went in with them. Charlie is all fixed up fine. Both bones of his leg were broken, but Doctor Collins took an X-ray before he set them and afterward, and says they have gone together all right.'

'How did Charlie stand the trip?' I asked.

'Stood it in good shape. When we drove up to the hospital door, a little red-headed nurse came out, and I said, "We've got a man here with a broken leg. Where do you want him put?"'

““Can he walk?” she asked.

““Sure I can walk,” says Charlie. One of us walked on each side of him and a man who was there held his leg up, and we got him into the room and on a bed. He wouldn't let them give him an anaesthetic while the leg was being set. I held his toe and heel straight as the doctor wanted me

to, and Charlie held on to the red-headed girl's wrist so tight that we thought it might have to be set, too.'

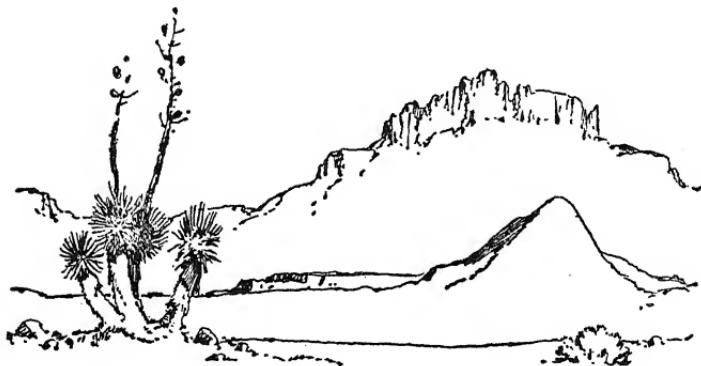
When I had thanked him for this good news, I felt that now I might be able to go to bed and sleep, but my mind kept revolving the events of the day and I was troubled by the weight of responsibility that now lay on my inadequate shoulders.

'That crazy, gate-breaking, kicking stallion!' I muttered to my pillow. 'Mr. Swenson must have known just what sort of a murdering beast he was trading to us.'

To my mind then came a remembrance of the cow that Mr. Swenson had taken in exchange for Jerry. While cows never bite the hand that feeds them, it is through sheer inability to do so, nature having given them no upper teeth in front. They are ready to kick any portion of their feeder's anatomy, and Bonny, the milk cow we traded for Jerry, was the 'out-kickingest' animal we have ever had on the ranch. As I compared her with the gentle cows which we had seen that noon, lying so contentedly in the sunshine, I remembered what Charlie had said.

'I feel as though I'd like to doze, or read, for a whole month, and not do another thing.'

'He has his wish,' I murmured, and soothed by that reflection, I fell asleep.



XVI. SNOWBOUND

ANIMALS are insatiable. At dawn the cattle in the corrals were bawling to be fed again. The horses came thundering down from the pasture at full gallop, eager for their morning allowance of grain. I was glad enough that I had cleaned the house before going to bed. After kindling the fire and putting on the kettle, I went out to feed the cattle and horses. Then ran back to cook and eat my own breakfast — for I am insatiable too.

The heifers must be turned out to graze in the pasture, and they were quite willing to go. Their baby calves were kept up each day, and, while they had plenty of hay and rolled barley to eat, they did not like it a bit. Four calves slipped past me as I drove their mothers from the first corral to the second. One managed to get into the third corral, but I held him there when the heifers ran out into the pasture.

Charlie would not be able to ride for months and there seemed no reason for keeping Art and Eagle here. Both are 'one-man' horses, quite ready to pitch off anyone else who

tries to mount them. I was turning them out on the range when Mr. Moore drove up with José Nuñez on the seat beside him. Mr. Moore must have left his own ranch before daylight in search of a man to help me. Now he intended to go to Douglas to see Charlie, and by night would be able to give me news of my husband over the telephone.

From the car José took first his precious guitar, which I was very glad to see, as it indicated that he meant to stay with me for some time. A canvas-covered *mochila* (bedroll) was all the rest of his luggage, his clothes being rolled up in his blankets. With these he started over to the cabin where he always sleeps. I was so glad to have him instead of a strange man to whom I would have had to tell everything. José is a thin, wiry, Mexican bachelor, in his thirties. As he is crotchety and likes to boss everybody, he sometimes gets into difficulties with our other workers, who resent having José 'play the *major-domo*.'

'Now, Señora, what is the first thing you want me to do?' asked José, when Mr. Moore had left us.

'Milk Mrs. Finnie,' I answered.

Mrs. Finnie's husky baby had emptied one of his mother's teats, but the other three were bulging out at all angles from her swollen udder. When she had been milked, José and I started out on foot to hunt for Charlie's big gray felt hat, which had been knocked from his head by a low-hanging limb as he rode home with his broken leg. We had to find it. It was a good one, for cattlemen take pride in their headgear and wear hats that 'cost money,' even when their boots and their trousers are patched. All that he had been able to tell me was that he lost it between two junipers in the upper part of the Home Pasture, and there are juniper trees everywhere except on the old cavalry parade ground. We started at the gate by which Charlie had entered the water-lot and back-trailed his horse to where we found his hat,

After our noon dinner, José saddled my mule Tobe and started out alone to hunt for horses from which to select a mount or two for his own use. From the horses that he drove in, we chose Chango, a gentle, white Spanish pony, and Hueso (Bone), a young bay, who is now plump and lively. When he first came here, he was so thin that we had to choose between Skin and Bone for a name.

For two days the weather had been unseasonably warm for the middle of March, and by the time José and I had finished our work the sky was hidden by a smooth gray pall of cloud and a soft damp wind was blowing from the south. On previous occasions when José has worked for us, there have been other Mexicans on the place with whom he spent his evenings. Now there was no one here but myself and his sleeping-quarters in the cabin were chilly, so I invited him into the living-room after supper to sit with me before the cheerful fireplace. It was then that I discovered that José does not know how to read. It surprised me, because his vocabulary is larger than that of any Mexican who had ever worked here.

‘Would you like to learn to read?’ I asked him. ‘I can teach you in the evenings.’

‘*Muchísimas gracias, Señora,*’ he replied. ‘I have no time to read. I like to talk too well and I already know how to do that.’

‘Was there no school near where you lived in Mexico?’ I inquired.

‘No, Señora. There was no school near my father’s *ranchito*, where my three brothers and I were born, but I might have learned to read and to write also if it had not been for my teeth.’ He grinned to let me see them. ‘They were too good and too sharp. I’ll tell you about it.

‘You see, Señora, our mother could teach us nothing but our prayers and she kept us at them for hours at a time,

down on our knees on the mud floor, so full of bumps that hurt our bare knees. Our father taught us to help him with the ranch work and we could ride as soon as we could walk. We could plow a straight furrow when we were barely tall enough to grasp the plow handles.

‘One day, when I was twelve years old, we had a visit from my godfather, who rode over on horseback from his own ranch, which was many miles from our own.

“‘My friend,’ he said to my father, “you have four fine boys and not one of them has ever been to school. What a pity!”

“‘You are right,’ replied my father. “All that my sons know is how to work in the fields or with the cattle.”

“‘If you will let me take José home with me,’ said my godfather, “he will have a chance to go to school with my own children.”

‘My parents were pleased with the idea and so was I — until I was seated behind my godfather on his horse, hanging to his jacket.

“‘*Adios*,’ said he to my parents and my brothers as he bade them farewell. “My young daughters will be very glad to have José live with us.”

“‘Have you no boys, *padrino mio?*’ (my godfather) I asked.

“‘Only three girls,’ said he.

“‘Then I shall learn more about plowing than reading if I go with you,’ I cried. “I’ll not go!”

‘For an answer he spurred his horse and off we started at a gallop. Who knows? I might have turned out to be a great scholar if I had not leaned forward and bitten him on the shoulder with my big, strong teeth. Two seconds later, I was on the ground, running for home, where there were three other boys to share the plowing.’

The telephone rang. It was Frank Moore, telling me that

Charlie was getting along very well and that the doctor now thought the wound would give no trouble. José, who had been waiting to hear the news from his patron, said good-night and started over to the cabin. In two minutes he was back again, his jumper and hat flecked with snow. Together we walked over to the corrals and found that the cattle were all standing up, huddled together, their tails turned toward the storm.

'If it snows heavily, these corrals will be filled with mud and slush by morning,' said I. 'We had better turn all the cattle out where they will be on hard ground and find shelter under the trees.'

We opened the gates to the Home Pasture. There was no need to drive the cattle. When they saw the open gate, they filed out silently and were swallowed up by the snow-filled gloom. Under most circumstances I should have been overjoyed to see the snow. Now I wondered if I should be able to go to town in the morning to see Charlie, as I so longed to do.

Twice in the night I rose and looked out of the window, sending the beam of my flashlight into a whirl of white flakes against an inky blackness. In the morning the storm was over and the sun shone upon banks and drifts of dazzling snow. Every tree was blanketed and burdened with it, and as it melted and splashed to the ground the drooping branches danced as they sprang back to their place. Little rivulets formed and trickled in every gully. There was no chance of my going to town that day, or of telephoning either. Our telephone line is strung on trees, and we rarely have a snowstorm during which old trees do not fall and take the wires down with them.

On the following day my trip to Douglas seemed farther off than ever. Already the river was so swollen by the melting of snow upon the mountain-slopes that the crossing near-

est our home was impassable for our car, which is built low to the ground. José and I were standing on the bank of the stream, watching the muddy water swirl past, when we heard a car chugging down the canyon on the other side of the river and we ran along the bank until we could see the road. The approaching car proved to be an old Model T, high up from the ground, and in it were two Mexican boys whom we know. They had come out to the mountains to get wood two days earlier and were now trying to get home. By hurrying, they might still be able to cross the river lower down the canyon before the flood reached the ford.

Above the roar of the river which separated us, I shouted to them in Spanish.

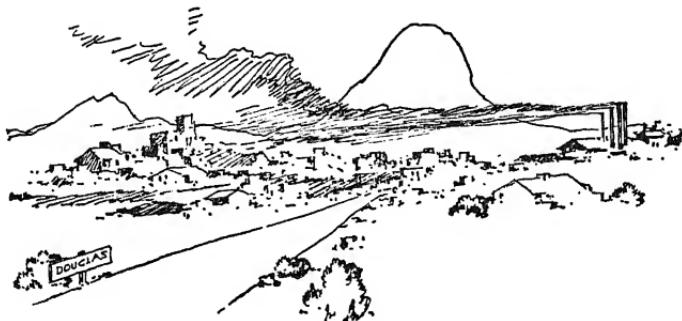
‘Please go to Carson’s Service Station and tell them about the big snow and the river!’

‘*Si! Si!* Señora!’ they shouted back, and started on down the canyon, having no time to waste, for the river was visibly rising every moment.

I felt relieved. If those Mexican boys reached town, Charlie would soon know what was keeping me at home. Carson’s Service Station is a garage much patronized by cattlemen, and in time it has become a habit to leave messages there for them, for the cowmen are almost sure to drop into the garage each time they go to town. Fred Carson finally grew tired of trying to remember all the things he was asked to tell this man or that, and he installed a blackboard, complete with chalk and an eraser. Soon it was full of messages. ‘Jim Hunt, Floyd Kimble wants to see you.’ ‘Ralph Cowan, your wife wants you to ’phone her quick.’ ‘George Stevens, there is a package here for you.’

The Mexican boys did beat the flood to the lower crossing, for by night there was a message on the blackboard which someone soon relayed to the hospital.

‘Charlie Rak, you had a big snow in Rucker and your wife can’t cross the river.’



XVII. CHARLIE COMES HOME

THE muddy waters ran off finally and the river became again a limpid stream which I could safely cross, after José waded into the icy water to throw out the large rocks which had washed into the ford. When I reached Douglas and parked the car in front of the hospital, John Cull, a cowman and a friend, was just coming out.

‘How is Charlie?’ I asked eagerly.

‘Getting along fine,’ Mr. Cull answered, ‘and he says he isn’t worried a bit about anything on the ranch because he knows you can run it all right.’

I came very near bursting with pride then and there, and, if I ever actually do so, the steps of a hospital is a splendid place for bursting.

Charlie was in excellent spirits. He was fortunate in having the best room in the hospital. It opened on the veranda and his friends could run in to see him at any time without formalities. Through the big windows that face one of the principal streets of the town, he could see the stream of auto-

mobiles and recognize acquaintances who stopped at the post-office, just opposite the hospital.

'When I get tired of reading, I watch the people going up and down the post-office steps,' he told me. 'I never knew before that there were so many bow-legged women in the world!'

His friends had been visiting him and his bedside table was full of papers and magazines. The nurses frequently popped in to entertain him with lively tales about the other patients. His leg ached and throbbed, of course, but he gritted his teeth and bore the pain silently, in the cowboy tradition, scorning the idea of 'groaning and grunting like an old woman.'

I felt much easier in my mind after seeing him, and from then on I expected to go to Douglas every few days, since it was too late in the spring to expect more severe storms. The snow had been the greatest of blessings. There was water everywhere; the weather was warm; soon there would be grass; and we have been through so many dry or cold springs that we knew how to appreciate our good fortune.

While the river was on the rampage, it had washed out the fence where it crosses the river-bed, and most of our weaners and heifers had escaped from the Home Pasture. It cost us several days of riding to find them again. Gradually we brought in from the range all the yearling steers, which were soon to be driven to the Spear E range, from which they could later be gathered and shipped when selling time came. One day we came across an animal that I greeted with joy. It was an unbranded calf. Not much of one it is true. He was an out-of-season calf, born in the fall and runty as fall calves are apt to be, but he gave me something for which I had waited for several years — a chance to brand one myself.

Charlie is an artist with the running-iron. I would no more

think of branding a calf when he is around than the wife of a portrait painter would think of touching with a brush a finished canvas of her husband's painting. We brought in the cow and calf, and, while José built a fire in the corner of the corral, I went to the house for the Burdizzo castrators and the

O

vaccine. We have two brands; the C R (for Old Camp Rucker), which is mine, and A Cross L, which is Charlie's. I decided that the latter was the easier brand to burn on a calf's hide.

José flanked the calf and tied it. I stood beside it, running-iron in hand, realizing how different is theory from practice. Acrid, white smoke rose from the burned hair as the hot iron touched the hide. The calf bawled and squirmed, but I branded him in a space of time during which Charlie could have branded three. When he was castrated, ear-marked, and vaccinated, José untied him, and he ran to his mother.

'Oh, Señora! Look!' shouted José. 'You have put A

O

Cross L on that calf, and the mother is a C R cow!'

'That's a runty little steer, so I put my husband's brand on it,' said I. 'If we find a pretty fat heifer calf, I'll put my own brand on her.'

I was really sorry that it was a steer and must soon be sold. Had it been a heifer, I might have kept her on the range and admired my handiwork in years to come.

As we continued to bring in yearling steers from the range, the time approached when we should need help to drive them over to the Spear E's, and I was thinking of this as I drove to town on my next visit to Charlie. His bed had now been rolled out on the veranda, and there beside him, smiling and talkative, sat our long-lost Alcario.

'I'm so glad you came in today, Mary,' said my husband. 'Alcario can ride back to the ranch with you.'

I was not a bit glad. Alcario looked very smirky. He had stayed away three months longer than he had said he would, and now, if he found his old job still awaiting him, he was sure to be unendurably conceited. However, Charlie had already hired him, and I took him back to Rucker that afternoon, promising that on my next trip to town I would fetch Juana and the children. On the way home my apprehensions increased. Alcario told me at great length that he was the best cowboy we had ever had; that no one else could do our work half so well. I foresaw that he and José would not get along, and when they met I was sure of it. Each was jealous of the other at sight, and I was obliged to give both of them every order, for if one tried to tell the other what to do, they quarreled and 'bowed up,' accusing one another of 'playing the *major-domo*.' After the steers had been driven over to the Spear E's, I felt easier. If the worst came to the worst and one of the men quit work, I could now manage to get along without him.

The knowledge that he had quite a little money saved up was making José melancholy, and he presently went down to Elfrida for a week's vacation, from which I knew he would return penniless and cheerful. His absence gave me a welcome respite from cooking *frijole* beans. For weeks I had been obliged to keep a pot of them on the stove all of the time. José called them 'Mexican strawberries.' He poured them over his breakfast eggs; mixed them with his potatoes or rice at noon, and sprinkled cheese over them at supper-time. If they were lacking at a single meal, he quoted to me the Mexican saying, 'If there are no *frijoles* in the house, there is nothing.'

'If I gave you roast turkey and ice cream for dinner, you'd still ask for beans,' I said one day with exasperation. I was tired of the very smell of beans myself.

'I'll tell you how it is, Señora,' he explained. 'We Mexicans

consider the feelings of the poor beans. If we neglect them when we have other good things, they get even by disagreeing with us sometime when we have nothing else to eat.'

I was dreading the return of José, knowing that it was growing more and more difficult to keep the peace between our two men. They needed the boss to settle their differences, and I did not think that Charlie could come home for a long time yet.

One noon I heard a car drive up very close to the door. The driver was Frank Moore, and in the back seat, his crutches beside him, sat Charlie!

'My! Wasn't I glad this morning when Doctor Collins told me that I could come home!' he exclaimed. 'A hospital is a fine place to be sick, but when you can hobble around, they treat you like a stepchild.'

During all the time in the hospital, Charlie had been very patient. Now that he was at home, he was 'r'arin' to go.' Never before had he been confined to the house for more than a day or so at a time. He wanted to work, and it took all hands and the cook to think of things that he could safely do while his leg was in a cast halfway to his hip. Each week I drove him to town to see the doctor, and one day, while I was in the waiting-room, I heard him yelling bloody murder. The doctor had cut off the upper part of the cast and bent the knee that had grown stiff from weeks of disuse.

'That hurt me more than when I broke the leg,' declared Charlie.

After that it was harder than ever to keep him out of the corrals, and more than once I was horrified to see him minding the gate on one leg and one crutch, waving the other crutch in the faces of the cattle that surrounded him.

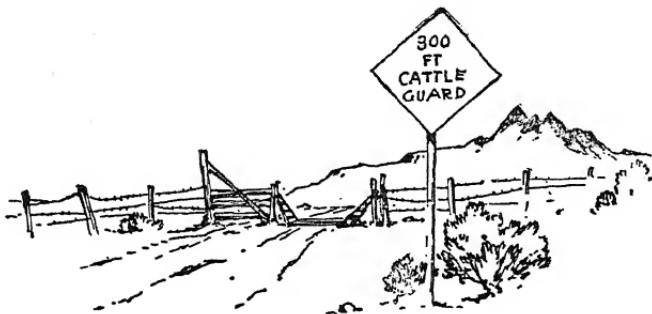
Maria Appolonia and Ofelia trotted around after the *pa-trón*, silent, all eyes. The older they grew the less they talked. Ofelia no longer needed her bottle of milk between meals.

Instead of that, Maria Appolonia always carried in her back pocket a crushed and grubby *tortilla* for Ofelia's mid-morning lunch. The dogs watched her hopefully as she chewed it, and often she let them bite off a little piece before putting it back in her own mouth. Somewhere on their travels the children had acquired a playmate, a shaggy, brown dog named Orejas (Ears), amiably tolerated by our dogs because he was small and friendly.

We were both happy when Maren Parsons flew down from Berkeley to visit us in June. She was the first guest whom we had met at the Douglas airport and we had a thrill as she dropped in from the sky. Time passed much more swiftly for Charlie while she was here to entertain him while I was riding. It was pleasant for me to have another woman in the house, after living so long in a world of men — and cows. About the time she flew back to California, Charlie graduated from crutches to a cane, and every day he undertook some job that kept me on tenterhooks for fear he would break his leg all over again.

‘Mary,’ he said one night after he had been quiet for an hour, ‘I have been thinking about that thick tangle of oak, pine, and juniper in the river bottom. There is no feed on it for the cattle and we can’t ride through it without having our clothes torn off by the brush. I believe I’ll go off tomorrow and hunt up a crew of Mexican wood-choppers to cut the oak into cordwood. Santiago Garcia will run out of money soon and be willing to work, packing the wood in here on his burros. I may be able to get some of the *acheros* (axemen) who have cut wood for us before, Carlos Rivero, Chico, and possibly your old favorite, Teofilo Romero.’

‘That’s a grand idea!’ I cried. ‘Next winter we can sell the wood, and now it will give you something to do until you can ride a horse again.’



XVIII. FOREST FIRES

FULL of his new plan of establishing a wood-camp, Charlie went to bed even earlier than usual, so that he could start out early in the morning to look for axemen. At all times of year we have the bucolic habit of going to bed about nine o'clock. Often before that hour we have nodded over our books.

‘To bed with the lark and up with the sun,
You get all the work and miss all the fun.’

Since nearly all the fun on a cattle-ranch is to be found in the daytime, we are not missing much.

Thunder growled and crackled, and after we turned out our gasoline lamp, lightning flashes illuminated the bedroom momentarily. The summer rains had not yet been heavy enough to soak the masses of dry leaves in the forest or drench the sod beneath the tufts of tinder-like old grass. We always dread the long daggers of flame that plunge from the sky in early summer, and we sleep better for the knowledge that the ‘lookout’ is sitting in his glass-walled room at the

top of the steel tower on Monte Vista, watching vigilantly for the wisp of smoke or tongue of flame that heralds a forest fire.

I woke suddenly at two o'clock, not knowing what had roused me until I heard the telephone, again sounding our call, two long rings and one short tinkle. I rose, put on my slippers, and stumbled sleepily to the telephone with some misgivings. No one ever sends glad tidings over the wire in the wee, small hours of the night.

'Gee! Thought I'd never get an answer!' exclaimed the 'lookout' man on Monte Vista. 'There's a fire in Rucker Canyon and it looks as though it might be right close to that big adobe house of yours, the Hermitage.'

I roused Charlie, who had not heard the telephone ringing. Naturally he would not be able to fight a fire, but he wanted to go to see it. We dressed as rapidly as possible and got into the car.

Leaving all gates recklessly open behind us, we fled down the road to the forks, then back in nearly the same direction along the other bank of the river. We saw the fire before we were halfway to the Hermitage — a clear, leaping blotch of flame, high against the blackness of a wooded hillside.

'Looks as though it might be in the beef pasture,' surmised Charlie.

We left the car before the door of the old house and walked slowly toward the flame, which was still burning fiercely. Curiously enough, it seemed no larger than when we first saw it. To avoid the brush because of Charlie's lameness, we turned into the river-bed, and there was the fire, almost overhead. Struck by the lightning, a great pine tree was blazing and flickering like a gigantic candle. About fifty feet from the ground, where the lightning had cut a deep gash in the resinous wood, the fire had burst forth and enveloped the top of the tree, outlining its thick branches against the dark sky.

Small twigs cracked and sparks fell in showers like the fading of a skyrocket.

'What are you going to do about it?' I asked Charlie, who is usually able to do something about everything.

'Not a thing,' he replied. 'There was enough rain with that lightning to dampen the ground around the tree. The sparks can do no harm, and there isn't a breath of wind. We'll watch it for a while to see if a big limb falls.'

We found seats on two boulders by the river-bank and sat with faces upturned to the fire. Another car was heard coming up the road and soon two Forest fire-guards joined us; they likewise decided that nothing immediate could be done and sat down to smoke and chat. I like talking as well as anybody — but not at three o'clock in the morning. I cannot even listen intelligently at that hour, and I stole away from the men to doze in the seat of our car, screened from the flames by the intervening trees. Charlie joined me there presently, and we drove home to catch what sleep we could before the sun rose, leaving the Forest guards to their vigil. I saw the tree after they felled it. Prone in the river bottom lay the giant pine, awaiting slow decay and, at last, a flood to sweep its shattered trunk down the river.

Not all our fires end so swiftly, and it is difficult to realize what tiny sparks may start a blaze that sweeps across a mountain-side.

José Nuñez was working for us last summer, and one noon he called to Charlie, asking him to come out to the water-lot and look at a little white plume of smoke, far on the slope above North Fork.

'Put up some lunch for us, Mary, please,' said Charlie when he returned to the house, 'and give us a first-aid kit and two canteens. José and I are going to a fire.'

By the time the horses were saddled, I had the knapsack packed, ready to be hung on the saddle-horn while they rode

and to be carried on Charlie's back when they left their horses to walk to the fire-line. Charlie had a rake and José a shovel across his shoulders, while an axe was tied beneath the stirrup leathers.

The men were well on their way when a warning of fire came in over the telephone, and I knew that other men would also be summoned by the 'lookout.' Charlie and José were gone all night and rode in the next morning at dawn, ate a big breakfast, and went to bed. When they left the fire, it was under control and in the care of two men. We thought the danger was over and so did the Forest Service men, but none of us had reckoned sufficiently on the weather. A wind sprang up, blowing strongly from the west, slamming the garage doors, fluttering a loose piece of iron roofing on the barn, raising 'wind-devils' in the powdery dust of the corrals. At noon I went into the darkened bedroom and reluctantly woke Charlie.

'The wind has started up that fire and it is out of control,' I told him. 'The Forest Ranger has telephoned, asking you to go back up there again.'

It was not necessary for José to go again, but two horses were saddled and I rode with Charlie to the last water in the North Fork of Rucker Canyon. From there on Charlie must proceed to the fire on foot, while I returned home, leading his horse. He was sure of having plenty of company on his climb. In one half of the double corral at the junction of North Fork and Main Canyons stood horses and pack-mules, munching on alfalfa, many bales of which had been fetched for them from Douglas by truck. Supplies of food for men were piled in the second corral, ready to be loaded on the pack-animals for transport to a base as near as possible to the fire. Trucks, loaded with men and fire-fighting tools, passed me as I returned home alone.

These preparations for combating the fire were all that I

cared to see. I had no hankering to go nearer to the flames. As a rule I am keen to see what is going on and, like the Athenians, I am always ready 'to tell, or hear, some new thing.' A forest fire happened not to be a new thing to me and I wanted to see as little of it as possible. I once spent a night on a California mountain when it was ablaze and left it by means of a train that was scorched as we ran through the flames on each side of the track. I could see all that I wanted of this fire from a knoll behind our house.

After supper José and I climbed to this knoll and watched the flames which were tinting the evening sky and glowing against the black bulk of the mountain range. On the following day we could see volumes of smoke hovering above North Fork. On the road up the canyon, which is not in view from our house, we could hear a procession of trucks laboring on a steep grade. In the afternoon a pick-up truck, bearing Government insignia, was driven hastily to our door and two uniformed men alighted.

The older of the two men was visibly agitated, 'het up' with the fires of executive ability; 'r'arin' to go before he had fairly arrived. Briefly introducing himself and his companion, he explained that they had stopped here on their way to the fire because he wished to use our telephone for long distance, if it were possible to get the connection.

'If the Forest Service has kept up the line, you should be able to telephone through Portal,' I answered.

These were evidently officials of rank in that Service, from Tucson, Albuquerque, Washington, or some other place from which the higher-up bureaucrats descend upon us at intervals. If the telephone did not work, let them place the blame.

'I have no time to wait for connections,' twittered the nervous man, who apparently outranked his quiet companion. 'Will you do the telephoning for me after we are gone?'

'Certainly, if I am able to get the people you want,' I replied.

In a breathless flurry he gave me two messages to deliver, each to a different person, and was starting in on a third when I halted him.

'I'll have to write all this down,' I told him. 'I'll get pencil and paper.'

Names, addresses, and messages were jotted down hurriedly as they came sizzling from the high-pressure mind of the big executive, who strode back and forth within the limits of our small living-room in a marked degree of impatience and agitation. Blankets were to be fetched by this man; shovels, rakes, and axes by that man; food supplies, extra trucks, pack-animals, and more fire-fighters were to be rushed to the scene of action by still other men.

He paused. I heaved a sigh. I am not used to acting as private secretary to the great. He bade me a hasty farewell and dashed for the car, to which his companion had already retreated. Suddenly he wheeled and came bounding back to the door. I seized my pencil to write his further instructions — but it was not needed.

'Don't ring up anybody! Don't order anything!' he cried excitedly. 'I'll go up first and see the fire!'

Upon arriving at the camp of the fire-fighters, located on the water nearest the conflagration, Charlie had soon learned why he was wanted. Nearly all of those who were sufficiently experienced to take command of a group of men on the fire-line had already worked until they were exhausted. While of those who remained, there was not one who could speak Spanish and thus take command of the Mexican wood-choppers, who had been summoned from Turkey Creek. Early on the following morning the men on the fire-line must be relieved and Charlie was asked if he would oversee the crew of Mexicans who would undertake this duty.

'Certainly — if you will let me pick my own crew,' he replied. This proviso being granted readily, Charlie chose from among the Mexicans fourteen men who, at some time, had worked for us on the ranch. He called out their names, Malacio Arviso, Carlos Rivera, García, Valencia, Flores, that of my friend Teofilo Romero, and many others equally familiar.

Before daylight they all ate a big breakfast. Then the men were paired off and to each pair was issued a gallon canteen of water, and to each man half a loaf of bread, a can of beans, and a small can of meat, to eat at noontime. With their shirts bulging out in front with these provisions, and each man carrying a tool (there were three axes, ten rakes, and one shovel to the crew), they followed Charlie up the trail as soon as they could see, relieving the weary men who had been on duty all night.

So far the fire had done no great damage in spite of its spread over a considerable area. Dry grass, so far up on the mountains that our cattle never crop it closely, low shrubs, and scattering timber, were all that had lain in the path of the flames. The danger lay in the possibility that the fire might get down into a wooded canyon, with seedlings and small growth beneath towering trees. Because of the draft created by its own rising heat, a forest fire travels up a mountain-side rapidly, a canyon acting like a chimney. Downward a fire progresses more slowly, carried along by the constant dropping of flaming branches; the rolling of blazing pine cones. While most of all to be feared is a strong wind, whose power for damage is incalculable, scattering sparks and burning embers in any direction and afar.

Charlie and his crew climbed up to the fireline and the expert Mexican axemen speedily felled the few dead trees and living shrubs which grew along the half-mile strip of ground which was the projected fire-break. The larger pieces of wood

were carried down below the break; grass, leaves, sticks, all that could feed a fire, were raked downward toward the coming flames until nothing remained in the clearing but stumps and rocks. Then the back-fires were started and when the main fire met the back-fire, there was nothing left to keep it alive, except the logs and stumps in the burned area, which might still burn for hours and could become a source of danger if a strong wind rose.

The first hours of the day were spent in working furiously against time, in the heat and odor of advancing flames. The late afternoon was spent in watching the fire-break to see that no fire was started on the far side of that barrier by a limb falling from a burning tree. The men were stationed far apart, each with his own section of the fireline to watch, ready to go to the aid of his neighbor if danger particularly threatened some part of the line.

The men who were to relieve Charlie's crew were so late in arriving that it was impossible to get back to the camp before dark. He checked off his men as they assembled, ready to go down the rough mountain-side on which there was no semblance of a trail and only the inborn sense of direction that is given to mountaineers to guide them. One man was missing, Nacho Flores. The others remembered seeing him only a short time before and felt sure that nothing had happened to him. The only thing to do was to return to camp as speedily as possible in the hope of finding him there. Instructing the men to follow him closely, each in touch with the one before and behind him, Charlie led the men down the rugged slope, across a ravine and to the camp. Among the fire-fighters who were resting there was the missing Nacho, who was greatly surprised to learn that anyone could have worried about him, old woodsman that he was.

A liberal helping of food was given to Charlie by one of the white men who had been hired to cook for the fire-fighters.

Charlie supposed, of course, that the Mexicans would be equally well provided with a good supper. Presently Teofilo and Malacio approached their *patrón*.

'Don Carlos,' said Teofilo, 'we are hungry, and there is nothing for us to eat but a few biscuits and some little pieces of cold meat.'

At once Charlie went to see the head cook, who said indifferently, 'There ain't much left to eat here, that's a fact.'

What he meant was that there was not much cooked food, because his fire was ringed about with raw supplies of all sorts that had been packed up the mountains on the backs of mules; a quarter of beef, beans, flour, bacon, eggs, onions, potatoes, canned goods, and dried fruit. Charlie at once appealed to the Forest Officer who was in charge of the camp, and the cooks began 'throwing the big pot into the little one and stewing the dishrag.' Dutch ovens full of steaks, others full of biscuits, canned corn, syrup, coffee, were all set before the hungry Mexicans in the shortest possible time and were consumed in a time even shorter. Silence fell over the camp, where each man was wrapped at once in a blanket and slumber.

Ill-news arrived at daybreak. A wind had come up swiftly, blowing about the half-charred brands in the fire area. The fire had jumped the break in two places and must be corralled again. Charlie and his crew climbed back to the scene of their labors and once more helped to surround the flames. Then, as they took up their stations along the fire-break, clouds formed above them and a thunder-shower quickly put out the fire that had originally been started by a stroke of lightning.

Down from the mountains came men, mules, tools. The trucks, waiting at the junction, were loaded with fire-fighters and their paraphernalia. The great executive, who had given me his instructions and taken them all back again, now went on to more important fields. The Mexicans returned to their

bear-grass *jacals* in the wood-camps, there to await impatiently the arrival of the Government check in payment for their work on the fire. A week after the excitement was over, word reached us that Teofilo Romero was in Douglas, wounded by a bullet through the fleshy part of his thigh. He had been so incautious as to exhibit his money while in a pool-hall (the Mexicans call them the 'poolies'), and he had been held up by two thugs while on his way to his room that night.

At once we drove in to town to see Teofilo. He has no family, and while he does not work for us steadily, in the Southern sense we are his 'white folks.'

Through the police we located him in a clean, cheerful little hotel kept by Mexicans. When we came into the lobby, we found Teofilo seated there, crutches by his chair, laughing and joking with two very pretty Mexican girls. It was evident that he was 'enjoying poor health.' He seemed glad to see us; assured us that he lacked nothing. The county physician was looking after his wound.

'For the rest,' he said complacently, 'I have the money that the Government paid me.'

'Do you mean to tell me that you didn't give up your money to those two robbers who held you up at the point of a gun?' asked Charlie.

Teofilo's tone was plaintive, but there was a merry twinkle in his small, deep-set eyes as he answered:

'Why should I give my money to those lazy thieves, Señor? You know yourself how hard I earned it, helping to put out that fire.'



XIX. MEXICAN YARNS

SANTIAGO GARCÍA had been on a *pasear* (trip) lasting for weeks. His money was all spent, and when Charlie found him visiting in the home of one of his Mexican friends in Pirtleville, he agreed to come back at once. That very night we heard his car snorting, rattling, and clanking; and the mournful howl of his hound Pinto set our dogs to barking.

For a great many years Santiago has worked in wood-camps and he went along with Charlie in search of wood-choppers. *Acheros* (axemen) are mountaineers by choice and one is rarely found living in a town. Several men whom we knew were willing to come here to work, each being given a separate contract for cutting a certain number of cords of oak wood. Carlos Rivera, Chico, Rosario, Lorenzo, all of whom had worked for us before, came at once and began building bear-grass *jacals* (huts) on a bench by the river, where there is always a pool of water. They cut forked poles for the corners and long poles for the side-walls. Two extra-long forked poles upheld the ridgepole, and the rafters of unpealed oak

were bound to these by thongs of *mescal* fiber. With picks the men dug bunches of bear-grass with which to thatch the walls and roofs of their houses, and Santiago packed this from the hillside to the building site. His burros were so hidden by their green loads that only their legs and long ears were visible.

As the rumor of a new wood-camp spread through the Chiricahuas, more Mexicans came to ask for work, some bringing their families on burros, others in dilapidated, worn-out cars. Among them was Ramón Chavez, a man whom we both liked at first sight, a small, middle-aged Indian, gnarled and bent by hard work, with clearly cut features. Vic Daniel, cowman of John Long Canyon, had employed Ramón as a field laborer for several weeks and now asked us to let Ramón chop wood, saying that the man was a hard worker. Ramón's wife, Manuéla, a short, scrawny creature, all hair and eyes, came with him in their rickety car. She was the very quintessence of gloom. Nothing pleased her, the camp site, the *jacal* that Ramón built for her, the other wood-choppers or their families. For several years previous, Ramón had worked in the smelters, and they had then lived in the Mexican suburb of Douglas, Pueblo Nuevo. Manuéla's sole topic was an unfavorable comparison of a wood-camp in the mountains with the social delights of the town and she angered the other Mexicans by weeping and wailing over her sad fate in having to live among them.

One of the last men to come and the most welcome of all was Teofilo Romero, who arrived on foot one noon while I was washing the dinner dishes. I filled a plate with food left from our meal and he sat at the kitchen table to eat with appetite. He said that the last ten miles to our ranch had been covered on foot because his old car had at last given out so completely that he had walked away and left it by the roadside. Teofilo is a very tall, black, shambling Indian, with a

low forehead, an undershot jaw, and small, sparkling eyes that are full of humor.

‘Are you entirely over the wound in your thigh, where those robbers shot you last summer?’ I asked.

‘Oh, yes, *gracias*, Señora,’ he replied. ‘That no longer troubles me. I was held up again a month ago, but this time I had no money to fight for and I was not shot.’ He chuckled and looked up at me quizzically.

‘Did it happen in town?’ I asked, wiping the dishes as we talked.

‘No, Señora. I was working with the railroad section crew that lives at Chiricahua Station. One very dark night we men were sitting out in front of our houses, which are built beside the railway and are very near the highway also. Suddenly a strange Mexican came out of the darkness on foot and asked very politely if one or two of us would be so kind as to help him. He said that his car had stalled a little way down the road and he had been unable to start it again. Perhaps the battery was too weak to start the engine, but if we would go with him and push the car a little, it might go on.

‘We had all been working hard and none of us wanted to walk down the road and push an automobile, but the stranger was very civil and, by the light that shone from an open doorway, we could see that he wore a necktie. You know, Señora, that Mexicans rarely wear a tie and we felt sure that he must be a man of means and importance. Nacho and I finally got up and followed the man down the road. When we had gone so far that no one at the section house could hear us if we made an outcry, the stranger drew something from his pocket and pointed it at us. “*Alto!*” (Hands up!) he shouted. “Give me your money — or I’ll shoot!”

‘Nacho had a few dimes and I had a few nickels. He took what we had and cursed because it was not more. Then he turned and ran, throwing something on the ground as he

went. We lighted a match and picked it up. It was a piece of iron pipe that we had taken for a pistol. We ran after him then, but he had too much of a start and we did not catch him.'

'Did he get away in his car, Teofilo?'

Teofilo laughed. 'He had no car, Señora. He had no gun — but all the same he held us up, because he did have a necktie!'

Charlie now had plenty to do: contracts to make; provisions to buy and issue to the wood-choppers; the work to oversee. He was preparing to go to Douglas one morning for a supply of flour, coffee, lard, salt-pork, and beans, when the feud between Alcario and José came to a head. Alcario struck at José with a club and José ran to the house because he had only his hands for defense. We were for discharging Alcario at once, but José said that he would go instead.

'I shall want to go to Elfrida in a little while, anyway,' he told us. 'Then you will need a man, so it will be better if I go now, today, before one of us kills the other.'

He put his guitar and *mochila* in the car and went off with Charlie within an hour.

Two days later, Alcario came to the house on the run. Maria Appolonia had crawled under the bed to drag out the little dog Orejas, who was tired of playing with her, and the dog had bitten her on the cheek. Charlie bundled the whole family into the car and took them to town as fast as he could so that the child might have attention, and came back alone, as all of them wished to stay several days with Doña Felipa.

If it were not for the emergencies that invariably crop up when we are short-handed, I should have tried to get along without a man during Alcario's absence. As it was, I struggled through seven days with the negligible assistance of Dolores, who had turned up at the wood-camp and was now willing to work as a substitute vaquero. He and Santiago

García are old friends and he could share Santiago's bachelor quarters for a few days.

One morning Dolores and I rode off toward Sycamore Canyon, Charlie hobbling out on his cane to watch us enviously as we left the corral.

'What were you all laughing and yelling about last night, Dolores?' I asked.

We had forded the river and were riding abreast.

'Chico and Teofilo came down from the wood-camp. We roasted some beef ribs on the coals after supper and told stories.'

'We heard you singing after we went to bed.'

'We *Mexicanos* always sing when we have full stomachs,' said Dolores. 'If we keep you awake, you should do as Señor Steele Woods did one night down at Slaughter's ranch.'

The trail narrowed here, as it plunged abruptly into an arroyo, climbed the opposite bank, and came out on a sunny mesa.

'Tell me what Steele Woods did,' I requested, as we rode across the mesa side by side.

'You know, Señora, the Slaughter Ranch is at San Bernardino, right where Arizona and Old Mexico come together, and when Don Juan was living he used to have great herds of cattle on both sides of the line. One year the Slaughters were getting ready for a big round-up and a great many vaqueros came to the ranch ahead of time, to be ready for the work and also to eat the good beef which was killed for us so that we might have all we wanted three times a day. We were camped by a well at quite a distance from the big ranch-house, and each night we sat around a camp-fire, singing, telling stories, and drawing pictures of the *Casa de Montezuma* in the dust with a finger. That is a famous maze that we like to draw.'

'The night before the cattle work was to begin, some Yaqui

boys arrived in camp, and they were so hungry for fresh meat that they were not satisfied with eating all that they could hold at mealtime. After supper they got one side of the ribs of a big fat yearling which had been killed that afternoon. They pierced the side of ribs with a long stick of green mesquite. The other end of the stick was sharpened and thrust into the ground in such a way that the meat hung over a bed of coals. When the ribs were broiled in that manner, we divided them amongst us and sat around the camp-fire, gnawing the bones, telling lies, laughing, singing, and having a good time.

‘Do you know Señor Steele Woods, Señora?’

‘We know him very well,’ I replied.

‘At that time he was still very young, *un muchacho* (boy), but he knew a great deal about cattle and had lived among Mexicans and Yaquis and knew all about us. Already he was *major-domo* for Don Juan Slaughter and he had trailed many herds of big steers out of Old Mexico for the *patrón*. That night he had brought his bed down to the camp in order to be right with us at daybreak when we were to start on our first day’s work. He was tired and wanted to sleep, and he knew very well that we vaqueros would sing late into the night if something was not done to stop us. He sat down by the fire for a while and gnawed on a piece of the ribs with the rest of us. Then he got up and stepped back a little way from the fire, with his hands in his chaps pockets.

“*Buenas noches, muchachos!*” (Good-night, boys!) he yelled to us. Then he drew some six-shooter cartridges from his pockets and threw them into the camp-fire.

‘They exploded, “Bang! Bang! Bang!” The hot coals scattered in every direction and so did we. “*Buenas noches, muchachos!*”’

We came to the upper end of the mesa, where a fringe of oak trees mask the head of a sheltered cove in which cattle

lie down after grazing in the early morning hours. Dolores and I separated without exchanging a word, each knowing well what was to be done. My part was to circle around the trees and come upon the cattle from above. His part was to wait until I drove the cattle down the hill and thereafter keep them in sight until I rejoined him.

Five cows and four calves jumped up and looked at me as I came into view at the head of the cove. They were making up their minds whether or not to run. Without haste I descended the slope, sing-songing the low call, 'Coo-oo, coo-oo,' which soothes our cattle. They jogged away by the trail which would bring them out on the mesa where Dolores awaited them and I followed slowly, taking care not to set them to running by riding too closely at their heels.

By the time I emerged from the trees, neither Dolores nor the cattle were in sight. They must have whipped off into the brush as soon as they caught sight of him. The little *Æohippus*, who hates to be left behind by other horses, plunged into an arroyo from which came a faint clatter of cattle running among loose rocks. He dodged boulders, ducked through an oak thicket, and came out, sweating and panting, on a bare hillside. There we overtook Dolores, poking along, cheerfully whistling *La Golondrina*.

'Where are the cattle?' I yelled.

'They split up,' he answered placidly. 'Some ran this way and some that way.' He pointed with uplifted chin, Mexican fashion.

Thanks to his carelessness, our morning's work was wasted and I led the way down to the Main Canyon, toward home.

Only the day before Dolores had told me how Mrs. Will Slaughter had punished him when he was one of the small Yaqui boys whom she taught in the school at the Slaughter Ranch. She had taken great pains to provide a picnic lunch for the little Indians on the last day of school. When the

dainties were all set forth on a cloth beneath a spreading tree, this same Dolores and another yelling, whooping Yaqui imp had wrecked the party by running a bunch of yearlings through the refreshments. As penance, Mrs. Slaughter had made him and his companion spend some moments kneeling on bare knees, beneath each of which were a few kernels of dry corn. I thought of something worse than that to pay him for losing the cattle. He should spend the afternoon shoveling the stickiest clay in Rucker Basin.

‘You have your lunch on your saddle,’ I said to him. ‘You can go up to the spring in the beef pasture and clean it out. You’ll find a shovel under the ledge beside the pool.’

He rode off dejectedly to do penance in the yellow mud, while I dismounted to open the gate in front of the Hermitage. Trees screened me from view, but I was able to see some distance down the road, and I recognized a man and a woman who were riding toward me. Hastily I let *Æohippus* through the gate and into the Hermitage yard, and concealed him in the tumbledown barn. I dashed into the house and took my stand in a dark corner of the deserted house, from which I could see through a window without being observed.

Surrounding the Hermitage are fruit trees, apples of various kinds, peaches, plums. On too many springs, late frosts have nipped them while still in blossom. On far too many summers, their fruit has been ‘nipped’ by human fingers. When we drove up to the old orchard last summer to pick our crab apples, there remained only a dozen or so on the tip of the topmost boughs; and while the orchard gate was closed, there were tracks of a horse and a mule beneath the trees.

‘Cats don’t come at half-past-eight,
Tap, tap, tapping at the garden gate.’

Nor do mules and horses close gates behind them. It seemed somewhat more than a coincidence that the two people, now

riding up the road in crab apple season, were mounted on a horse and a mule.

I heard horseshoes smiting the stones and prayed that *Æohippus* might not nicker and betray us both. The riders halted and I could see them clearly as they sat in front of the house in the sunshine. Behind the cantle of each saddle was tied a roll of something which looked suspiciously like grain sacks in which to put the fruit.

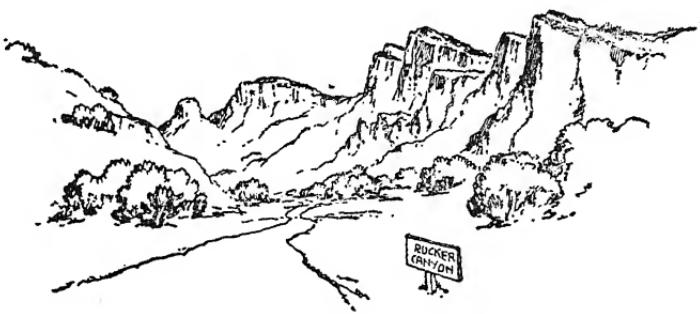
'Git off and look at the seeds in some of them crab apples!' cried the woman in a shrill, penetrating voice.

The man dismounted, entered the gate, and passed out of the range of my vision.

'The seeds is white yet!' he yelled to his companion.

'Better leave 'em alone fer another week!' she screeched.
'They ain't ripe enough to jell good!'

I chuckled to myself as they rode away. Upon their return a week later, I intended that they should find only a dozen or so of crab apples on the tip of the topmost boughs. I hope they 'jell good.'



XX. DAMSELS, BUT NO DISTRESS

TRADITIONALLY there is romance in the West, born of starry nights and sunlight streaming down on purple mountains. Now and then one comes here frankly in search of romance. Men find it in old tales, old guns, in galloping horses. Women look for it only in the rider of the horse.

An Eastern girl once visited us, a blonde beauty, with long, crinkly hair wound about her head in a heavy coronet braid. We had been asked to invite her to spend a few days with us on her first trip West, and she had prepared for the visit by reading novels of ranch life, wherein a pretty girl had only to ride out in the morning on a prancing steed to find handsome young cowboys all over the range as thick as jack-rabbits.

Our cowboys proved to be Mexican Indians, black, middle-aged ones, whose days of dancing and guitar-playing had long before ended with their marriage to slender, black-eyed señoritas, who were now, alas, plump and torpid squaws.

We drove her about a little to show her other ranchers, staid, married men, who, on our arrival, at once withdrew to

the barn or corral to talk comfortably with Charlie, leaving the womenfolk to our own talk of quilts, chickens, or gardens. Poor Desdemona (so nicknamed by us because of her golden hair), none of the men were sufficiently interested in her to play Othello, even to the extent of telling her tales of their former travels and adventures.

'Are ALL the men married?' she asked after a few days utterly barren of romantic adventure.

'Most of them are,' I admitted. 'The young schoolma'ams snap them up before they are quite dry behind the ears.'

I told her that we did know one handsome cowboy and one rich cattleman in this vicinity who were still unmarried. She brightened up considerably at the thought; only to make a face at me when I added that one was eighteen years old and the other sixty.

She left us to visit on another ranch near Flagstaff, and from there wrote me of her continued ill-luck.

'There is a family living on a ranch near here,' she wrote, 'with seven big grown-up sons, all cowboys. I met only one of them and he was terribly jolly and good-looking — just like the cowboys in books. And will you believe THIS?' (Savagely underlined.) 'He was the only one out of the whole seven brothers who was already married!'

One busy morning I heard a car drive up, and before I reached the door I saw a Forest Ranger ascending the steps of the terrace. He looked haggard and harassed. His usually good-humored expression was suffering from blight.

'May I use your telephone?' he inquired. 'I want to report that I have found the lost girls.'

Of course I was consumed with curiosity, and when he had delivered that curt message to someone at the other end of the line, I immediately wanted to know what girls, where, when, and all about it.

'Two girls started out for a horseback ride yesterday, from Paradise, at the north end of these mountains. They got lost, and their folks have been awfully scared. We have been riding all night, hunting for them, and we found them only a little while ago.'

'Where are they now?' I asked.

'Outside in the car,' he replied, with the lack of enthusiasm of a man who was tired and sleepy after a night in the saddle.

At once I invited the girls to come into the house, and soon heard the rest of the story. The Ranger and another man had picked up the tracks of the horses ridden by the young women and trailed them to the floor of Rucker Canyon. There they found the riders quite unharmed and entirely composed, seated in the leafy grove in which they had slept cozily all night.

Six miles down the canyon, at our ranch, was the nearest telephone through which they might send word to the anxious relatives of the girls and let other searchers know that they were found. The four started down the trail, riding single-file, Indian style, the Ranger leading the way and the second man bringing up the rear. After riding two miles, they reached the junction of two canyons, the end of the wagon road, where one trail leads to Paradise and the other to the spot where the girls were found. By good fortune they encountered a camping party there beside the river. The man who had helped in the search took the trail back to Paradise by way of Monte Vista, taking all the horses with him; while one of the campers drove the girls and the Ranger down to our house. The driver of the automobile was a portly, middle-aged man, amiable, placidly glad to have been of service. He showed no sign of being thrilled with his part in the rescue of beauty and departed without a backward glance.

The girls were not hungry. They had left home with a

plentiful supply of lunch and still carried a few sandwiches in a canvas bag which had been hung on a saddle-horn. They had not suffered in the least from a balmy summer night spent under the stars. They had also brought with them everything needful to repair the damage to hair and complexion, and a few moments before a mirror restored their somewhat disheveled, slept-in appearance. When they were assured that messages had reached their families, nothing remained but to enjoy themselves. Of course they were politely voluble in expressing regret for the trouble their misadventure had occasioned. They soon went out on the terrace and sat there in the shade, laughing, chattering, blonde waves close to brown curls. I went about my work in the house. The Ranger, after telephoning to his wife and one or two other people, sat down to read and doze; waiting for a car that would take them all home.

Charlie was expected in by noon, and I knew that it was unlikely that our visitors would leave before then. I pounded jerk and cooked it with gravy. Baked two large pans of biscuits and set the table for dinner. Charlie drove in, was introduced to his fair guests, laughed and talked with them a moment or so, then left them to come inside for a visit with his friend, the Ranger.

‘We tried to get you on the telephone last night about eleven o’clock,’ the Ranger told him. ‘We wanted you to go up the canyon and look for the girls, but we couldn’t get you.’

‘What a lucky break for me that we didn’t hear the telephone!’ exclaimed Charlie fervently.

We all ate dinner and just as we were leaving the table — and very little else — two weary ranchers from the San Simón side of the Chiricahuas, red-eyed from loss of sleep, rode up to our door on tired horses. They had been hunting for the girls since the crack of day and had come here to telephone for news of the search. Also they wanted to let

their wives know where they were and when they were likely to come home. Of course they were very happy to learn that the search was over. Their expression hinted that they would have been just a little happier if it had never been necessary.

I put on two more plates and cups, opened a can or so, and hastily prepared a fried-eggy lunch for these horsemen. Ahead of them still lay a long, rough ride of several miles, across the mountains to their home. Charlie took their tired horses in charge, put them in the corral, and fed them hay.

‘Say, Mrs. Rak,’ said the brown-haired girl, ‘you’re getting the worst of this! Let us help you with the dishes.’

We had just finished wiping the last plate when we heard another car arrive and went outside to see who else had come. From the automobile leaped a tall, broad-shouldered young man. His eyes were large, dark, and brilliant. (He had not been up all night.) His smile was radiant; his movements as lithe and graceful as those of any hero in a two-dollar romance of the range country.

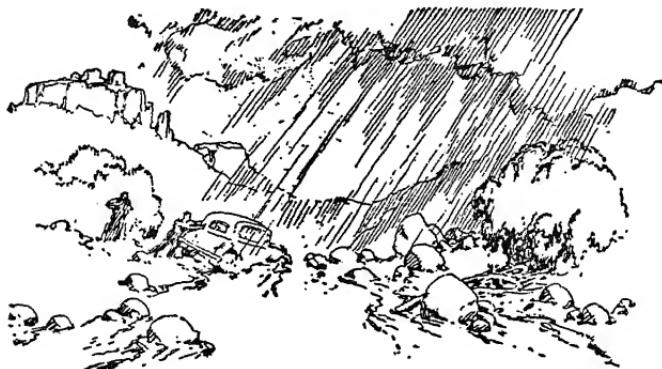
‘Now, this is more like it!’ I thought, as he bounded up the steps, all eagerness. ‘Too bad there’s only one young man — but maybe he is one of seven handsome brothers.’

The gallant youth swept his broad-brimmed hat from his black wavy hair as he was briefly introduced by the Ranger, who had been waiting for him to come.

‘Well, here I am!’ cried the newcomer. ‘What’s up?’

‘Yes, here you are,’ agreed the Ranger — ‘and about time, too. I sent for you because I want you to drive these girls and me back to Paradise.’

‘To Paradise? All that way!’ exclaimed the young man. ‘I’ll have to telephone to my wife before we start. Gosh! I wish I’d brought her along!’



XXI. CHIVALRY

'There was an old hen and she had a wooden leg,
 Best little hen that ever laid an egg.
She laid more eggs than any on the farm,
 Another little rain won't do us any harm.'

CHARLIE declares with some truth that he can't carry a tune in a corked jug; nevertheless, he was singing as he came back from the rain-gauge, measuring-stick in hand, to show me that over an inch of rain had fallen during the night. We had been enjoying what we term 'grass rains' all summer. They brought up the Sudan grass in the hayfield; they ended our anxieties about feed on the range. What we now needed were drenching rains to send the river down in flood; to store water in the mountains and ensure the flow of springs and wells for the coming year.

'Now,' said Charlie happily, 'if we can only get a good cloudburst or some heavy thunderstorms on top of this, we'll have water everywhere on the range.'

No cowman ever yet admitted to having enough moisture to satisfy him completely. There is a story they love to tell on themselves.

Two cowmen were on the Ark with Noah, and on the day that it landed on Mount Ararat, they went out to look at the range on behalf of the two head of cattle that were on board.

'Had a pretty good shower here,' commented one cowman, looking at the receding waters.

'Be all right if we get another like it in a day or two,' agreed the other.

We are the official observers for this vicinity, and in our yard is a gauge furnished by the Weather Bureau. Every cattleman has some device for measuring the rainfall on his own ranch and these vary in accuracy all the way from an exact gauge like ours to 'the pan the chickens drink out of.' As all cattle-ranches extend over several square miles of territory, one portion may have a deluge while another is dry. This is particularly true in summer, when thunder-showers are local and the rains 'spotty.' Our own Rucker Basin is so ringed about by high mountains that we are able to see only what goes on right over our heads. As soon as he had measured our own rainfall, Charlie went to the telephone to find out what luck our neighbors had enjoyed.

'What about the Moores?' I asked as he hung up the receiver.

'Good!' he reported. 'Frank Moore says he had a big rain on his north end.'

As usual when we anticipate a flood, Charlie went over to the shed by the blacksmith's shop and got to work on the old touring-car that we have named the 'Water Wagon.' It is so battered, so high up from the ground and of a shape so outmoded in all respects that people pause beside it whenever it is parked in town, renewing their memories of how cars

used to look, long, long ago. Nevertheless, we would not part from it — not even to a museum. 'Pretty is as pretty does.' The Water Wagon has streamlines of its own, gained while crossing rivers and creeks when the modern, low-slung cars would not risk it.

Charlie likes to be prepared to go to town in any weather, although we seldom leave home when lowering clouds are massed above Turtle Mountain and the wind blows softly from the south. We always keep on hand enough provisions for a month. Hundred-pound sacks of beans, sugar, and potatoes stand on low shelves, and the big bin, into which mice cannot gnaw their way, is full of flour, cornmeal, rolled oats, rice, and macaroni. There are rows of coffee-tins, baking-powder, tomatoes, syrup; lard by the case; matches and tobacco by the carton. There are big 'longhorn' cheeses in the screened cupboard, slabs of salt-pork and bacon. Big stone crocks are full of eggs 'put down' in water-glass in the spring when eggs are cheapest. There are hundreds of glass jars of fruit which I have 'put up' when our trees bear a crop. (No one seems able to tell me why we put fruit up and eggs down.) Cream is always rising on pans of milk on the screened shelves, and beside them are pats of home-made butter. When we kill a beef in cold weather, the meat is hung out each night to cool; is taken down at dawn, wrapped heavily in canvas, and laid in the storeroom. In summer we 'jerk' the meat, by cutting it into strips and drying it in the sun. Flour sacks full of 'jerky' hang from the rafters beside the little cloth sacks of sausage which Charlie makes of fresh pork and venison during the deer-hunting season.

The thick-walled, cement-roofed, adobe storeroom, which squats in the shade of the house, half underground, keeps our food perfectly, except for the milk, which is 'scared stiff' and turned to clabber in every thunderstorm.

Alcario walked over to the shed where Charlie was at work

on his old car. Ever since José left, it had been growing more and more difficult to endure Alcario's vain, bragging ways. Although his words were civil and he did his work well, there was a look of insolence in his eye, a swagger in his walk, which told us that he would either quit or be fired before long.

'I have brought in the horses from the pasture,' said Alcario, after watching Charlie for a few moments in silence.

'We won't need them,' replied my husband. 'It is wet for riding and I am going to work on this car.'

'Señor!' snapped Alcario in a rude, angry tone, 'the next time you do not want to use the horses, tell me the night before, so I shall not be put to the trouble of getting them.'

'There will be no next time for you, Alcario,' said Charlie. 'You have wrangled horses here for the last time.'

'Then I wish to go today,' demanded Alcario.

'Pack up, and I'll take you to town as soon as I get this car to going,' said Charlie — 'and be quick about it, because it has rained heavily on the mountains and I want to leave before the river is too high.'

When the mice had been routed out of the cushions of the Water Wagon, a battery was installed, the tires were pumped up, and the tattered curtains hung in place. Fortunately, Alcario's family had been using our furniture and had only their bedding and clothing to take away. In the back of the car were tire-chains, a tow-chain, a shovel, an axe, two jacks with boards upon which to set them in soft mud. To these I added a package of sandwiches, an old overcoat and a blanket to be used if Charlie had to pass the night on the road, bogged down, or waiting for some creek to run down.

'Don't try to come back if the river is high, even if that car can swim,' I cautioned him.

Early in the morning the two Holstein milk cows had been turned out to graze on the range until nightfall and I

could see them, black and white against the green expanse of Soldier Mesa, half a mile away. I wished that I had turned them into the Home Pasture for the day. It was again raining in the high mountains above us and by night the cows might not be able to wade across the river to return to their calves.

Santiago García was packing in cordwood and he arrived with his loaded burros as I stood by the gate. Swiftly he unloaded them, not taking time to rick the wood as he threw it off. He quickly wound the long pack-ropes about the pack-saddles; hurrying back to the Forest for another load before the rain reached the floor of the canyon.

‘Burro! Burro! Choo-choo-choo!’ he called out to hasten them, and strode off behind the burro train, looking up at the darkening sky.

By noontime the thunderheads had swollen monstrously. Monte Vista and Turtle Peak on the north were blotted from view by long, slanting lines of torrential rain. Over Sunset Peak, southeast of us, hung a black, threatening mass of clouds.

‘If those two storms meet, we’ll need an ark!’ I thought happily, and a roar of thunder answered my prophecy.

Back of the house is a great pine tree which was killed by lightning some time ago and lies upon its side, half-supported by its decaying branches. On its thick trunk I climbed, and thus lifted above the low brush which surrounds it, I watched the pageant of the approaching storm, my skirts whipped by the moist wind. Santiago came in with his second load of wood, looked again at the sky and unsaddled his burros for the day. Thunder crackled overhead and the dogs scampered for home, ready to crawl under the beds, as they always do when a tempest centers near the house. The first great drops of rain splashed on the hot stones.

I was hastily taking the dry dishtowels from the clothes-

line when a car rolled into the yard, and two large, important-looking strange men got out and strolled leisurely toward me.

‘We’ve come to buy some eggs,’ said one of them confidently, as though he were in a shop.

‘We are camping with our families up in the canyon,’ explained the other, a trifle more graciously, ‘and we have run short of butter and eggs.’

‘I’m sorry, but I have none to sell,’ I replied. ‘The nearest place where you can get them is some distance down the canyon. You’d have to cross the river four times, and I don’t think you will have time to make it.’ I looked up at the threatening sky as I spoke.

‘What river?’ asked the first man disagreeably. Campers usually expect the nearest rancher to be their purveyor.

‘The stream you crossed just at the foot of the hill before reaching here,’ I explained.

‘You call that a river!’ he said contemptuously. ‘A little water and a lot of rocks!’

‘I’ve started away from home more than once when that river was dry,’ I retorted, ‘and I found that I couldn’t get back because of a flood that came down within an hour or so.’

‘We’re not as scared of a little water as you are,’ observed the second man, and they both laughed in a cocksure manner that riled me. ‘How do we get to the place where we can buy what we want?’

I told them how to reach a ‘nester’ ranch, ten miles away. I no longer cared in the least if they were stuck in the river, yet they had left women alone up in the canyon and I stopped them as they were getting into their car, to ask where their camp was located. It proved to be in a place that we know well, on a broad, rocky shelf beside a pool.

‘That is a safe place,’ I said, with relief. ‘We put salt

there for the cattle in summer because the flood waters never reach it.'

The men drove away, laughing derisively at my concern, and I ran to the house through great drops of rain which were now peppering down in earnest. I threw out all the telephone switches to keep the lightning from damaging the instrument, closed all the windows on the south side of the house, then stood under the stout iron roof of the back porch, from which the rain was already cascading in sheets. The two great clouds, which I had noticed earlier in the north and south, were now rushing to a cataclysmic meeting in the eastern sky, drawn together by some mighty air current whose power was irresistible. They touched and became one black, ponderous mass of vapor, torn by long jagged flames, reverberating with unceasing thunder. Like the roar of a heavy surf came the sound of torrential rain falling on mountain-slopes, tearing away the soil, breaking trees, sweeping rocks into the gullies. A cloudburst.

The sun came out presently to see what damage had been done and smiled upon rain-spangled trees and a river in tumbling, crested flood. The dogs crawled out from under the beds and wagged glad tails because they had lived through the terrors of one more tempest. In my oldest shoes, I squelched and slid through the mud until I reached the river. Already the crest of the flood had passed by, leaving masses of dried leaves and sticks along the banks to mark the peak of its rise. Borne by the swift current at the center of the stream were logs, tangled roots, and dead branches, tokens that every fence was broken where it crossed the river. To repair them was a small matter of hours, for every 'water-gap' is an independent section of fence, suspended from stout cables, swung well above the river. They need only to be cleared of brush and retied lightly at the ends with small wires which will break when the next flood comes.

On the far bank of the river stood the milk cows, fearing to enter the turgid stream, bawling to their calves, who answered dolefully from the corral. I came back to the house by a roundabout way, passing Santiago's cabin. He said his roof had leaked a little, and the blankets from his cot were hanging on the fence to dry in the hot sunshine. Before his door the burros were munching corn, each having his share on a separate bit of canvas spread on the ground. Santiago takes very good care of his burros. He says that their backs are as different as his foot and mine, and he himself makes a pack-saddle to fit each one, so there is never a sore back among them.

'How is Muchacha?' I asked, looking at the little brown *burrita* standing near him. When she was very tiny her mother died and Santiago has brought her up by hand.

'She is growing fast,' he told me proudly. 'Sometimes she comes into my house and eats *frijoles* and *tortillas* like a Christian.'

As he talked, he was mending with buckskin the leather apron that he wears when he handles cordwood in order to save the wear and tear on his overalls and shirts. Santiago pinches his hard-won dollars while he is working in order to take longer vacations, and makes his clothes last as long as possible, or even longer.

Nearing the house, I suddenly remembered the two 'go-getters' who had blithely set forth to buy eggs and butter, whether or no. I threw in the telephone switch and called up a neighbor who lives down the canyon.

'I should say I have seen those men!' she answered. 'John's out now, dragging their car out of the river. I never saw men so mad. They're raving!'

'I did my best to stop them,' said I, 'but they would go on, "come hell or high water."'

After working for a while in the house, I went down to

have another look at the river, which had gone down several inches from the flood peak. There is seldom a daylight hour during which I may loaf with an easy conscience. This seemed to be one. I took an old book from the shelf, Harold Lamb's story, *The Crusades*, and began reading it for the third time. Forgetting all else, I wandered for a space in that narrow strip of land which is Palestine, surrounded by paladins and chivalrous knights, who courted danger and hardship —

A knock at the door! The dogs leaped up to rush out, barking.

Before me, white with fear of the dogs, stood the very wettest woman I have ever seen away from a swimming-pool. A summery dress of pink, flowered print clung to her slender form. Her fair hair hung limply about her ears. Her once-white shoes, oozing water, were already bursting at the seams. She was trembling from excitement and exhaustion.

'What in the world has happened?' I cried. 'Come in. The dogs won't hurt you.'

She entered reluctantly, pleading her haste.

'I came to get help! I have to go right back!' she said breathlessly. 'Our car is stuck in the river!'

She stood just inside the door, refusing to sit down and rest even for a moment.

'Are you stuck in the crossing at the foot of our hill?'

'No! I think it is a mile or more down the road. I've walked and walked — trying to find a house. I got through the river somehow, hanging to a broken fence. They'll wonder what has happened to me. I want somebody to get a car right away and pull us out.'

'I can't do that,' I said, shaking my head. 'No car can cross the river here. The water would get into the engine.'

'We crossed it twice down below,' she contended.

'And you stuck in the third crossing,' I reminded her.

‘The farther up the river you go, the deeper the water is.’

‘My sister and her husband are waiting for me to bring help!’ she insisted hotly.

‘A man! And he let you be the one to go for help?’

‘I — I — offered to go,’ she stammered defensively. ‘I don’t mind getting wet.’

Evidently her brother-in-law did mind getting wet. Shades of the knights of chivalry!

Then, briskly, as though to end all my foolish hesitation by a clinching argument, she said, ‘He’ll pay you for coming to help us.’

Some time was lost in convincing her that money would not float a car across a stream that is over its distributor.

‘All I can do,’ I said finally, ‘is to ask Santiago García, our Indian packer, to go back with you and see what can be done with a block and tackle. He may manage to get the car out with that if there happens to be a big tree on the bank to which he can tie.’

As we walked over to Santiago’s cabin, she told me that they had come out from Bisbee, intending to join some friends who were camping in the canyon — the big butter-and-egg men, no doubt. I explained matters to Santiago, who threw up his hands with horror at the plight of the señorita, *La pobrecita!* (poor little thing!) and willingly consented to go with her.

When he went into his cabin to put on some shoes and overalls still more dilapidated than the ones he was wearing, she nervously inquired if I thought it safe for her to go off alone in the woods with this Indian, whose swarthy, deeply lined face, and guttural voice had evidently alarmed her.

‘I’ve been here alone with him often for days at a time,’ I replied reassuringly.

Inwardly I was comparing Santiago very favorably with the man who snugly awaited her in the car down the canyon

I went with them as far as the river. She stepped from the bank, fastidiously refusing to take the black, bony hand which Santiago gallantly extended to her. Her foot slipped on a rolling stone and she fell beneath the muddy water. He dragged her to her feet and together they forced their way across the stream, the water swirling about her waist and tugging at the lean knees of the tall, lanky Indian. They struggled up the slippery bank and entered the woods.

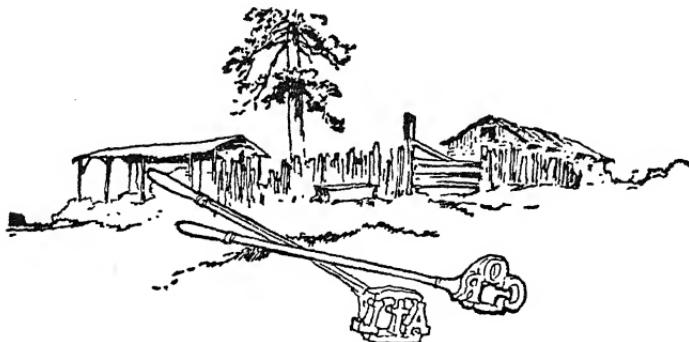
At dusk Santiago returned and paused, dripping, at my door. He was shaking his great head and angrily muttering a stream of Spanish words which were hardly distinguishable.

'Yes, the car is out of the water and headed back to Bisbee,' he growled. 'In the car was a big, strong, fat man,' Santiago continued, growing more angry and less coherent as he told his story; 'a lazy coyote, all dressed up in fine clothes and nice shiny shoes, dry and comfortable. While that poor girl, *la pobrecita*, was wading across rivers and running through mud to get help for him!'

'Did he pay you well for helping?' I asked, when his angry grumbling ceased.

'Pay me! *Valgame Dios!*' exploded Santiago. 'He offered me money — but I wouldn't take a dollar that had been in the pocket of a man like that!'

There still is chivalry.



XXII. COUNTING OUR CATTLE

GREAT day in the morning! Charlie turned the stirrup outward and put in his left toe, grasped the horn, and pulled himself into the saddle for the first time in many months. We went out riding together for a short ride down the road to Mr. Heyne's place. Riding did not seem to hurt the leg, which was now strongly knit, but Charlie would have to be careful when he rode through the brush, lest his toe catch and twist his leg. Someone else must take the brunt of the riding and that someone we must find. Branding time was near at hand and there was to be a cattle count as well.

Although we very rarely leave the ranch entirely alone, I decided to go with Charlie to Douglas in search of a new vaquero. It still surprises us to find that we may leave home after a leisurely breakfast, do all our errands and return before night. Without having moved an inch, we are sixteen miles nearer Douglas than we were a little while ago. In earlier years we used to open and close thirteen gates within

the first twelve miles of our journey. No two of these were alike — except in being nuisances. Some were barbed-wire 'Texas gates.' Some were of heavy lumber, warped, sagging, and full of splinters. After opening a few of these, I was also full of splinters. A horseshoe on a chain was the usual mode of fastening them.

'Grandpa' Winkler finally conferred a boon upon the community by building a 'run-over' (cattle-guard) out of green oak poles, with an old cowhide nailed upon them to keep the cattle from breaking their legs while trying to run over them also. Other men quickly followed 'Grandpa' Winkler's noble example and soon the gates on the road were but an unpleasant memory.

In addition to opening the gates, we used to creep through rocky washes, twist around mesquite bushes, fight mud or jounce through dust-filled holes for fifty-six miles before reaching town. Recently the rocks have been scraped from an old ranch road through Leslie Canyon. Hills have been cut down and hollows built up until it seems like a boulevard to us. It is a dirt road still, with stretches of slippery clay that are skiddy in wet weather. Floods may turn us back at Leslie Canyon or Mud Springs Draw. On most days of the year we roll smoothly over the gentle green hills between the Swisshelm Mountains and the Pedrogosas until we go over the divide and see the Sulphur Springs Valley outspread before us, the smoke from the tall stacks of the Copper Queen Smelter billowing high above the land to tell which way the wind blows.

When we reached town, we drove up and down the streets of Douglas in which many Mexicans live, and went over to Pueblo Nuevo as well, asking this man and that if he knew of a vaquero who wanted work. Even if we did not find a cowboy that day, the news that we wanted one would be widely broadcast. We found no one who would be at all

likely to suit us, but several of Charlie's Mexican friends promised to look for a man for him.

Before us as we drove homeward, the mountains rose in a black, bulky mass. Beacon lights along the airplane course winked at us from hills on either hand, sole illumination in miles of unpeopled blackness. Cattle, lying by the roadside, rose as we approached and stood before us, bewildered by the sudden glare of our headlights. Charlie turned out our lights and crept past them in the darkness, as cowmen always do.

We left the floor of the Valley as our road made a series of sweeping curves which brought us to the divide. For an instant we were in the level saddle between two peaks before we wound down to the bottom of Leslie Canyon, crossed the stream, and came out on the Hunsakers' range. The light from their ranch-house twinkled at us from a cove at the base of high hills. There was a sudden flash of light on a distant hill. An automobile swept down the long slope and sped past us — the only car we met in forty miles.

Through the windows of the OK ranch-house we could see the Meadows family sitting in the living-room, and we stopped for a chat. Charlie told Mr. Meadows that we had been to town to hunt for a cowboy and had found none.

'Why look around town when you already have a cowboy on your own ranch?' asked Mr. Meadows.

'We already have one?' repeated Charlie wonderingly. 'Who is he?'

'Ramón Chavez,' said Mr. Meadows, laughing.

'Ramón Chavez is a wood-chopper, and a good one,' said Charlie.

'Ramón Chavez is a cowpuncher — and a good one,' declared Mr. Meadows. 'I worked cattle with him myself years ago,' he continued, 'and I don't believe he has forgotten how to turn a cow.'

Ramón was delighted when Charlie offered him a job as vaquero. I thought that Manuélá would cheer up when she moved from a grass *jacal* to a stout adobe house with everything in it for comfort.

‘It is *muy triste* (very sad) here,’ wailed Manuélá. ‘There are no women to talk to, as there were in the wood-camp.’

Ramón barely had time to become accustomed to his horses and learn something about the range when the time came for the branding and, in this year, a cattle count.

We have a permit on the National Forest which allows us to run a certain number of cattle within the limits of Rucker Basin, which is fenced off from our neighbors and is called our allotment. This permit, together with those of our neighbors, was issued for a ten-year period. Each year we pay in advance a grazing fee, and the number of stock which we may have is not reduced by the Forest Service unless it can be shown that our cattle are damaging the Forest by overgrazing, thus injuring the range and causing erosion. Naturally, since we have an investment in our privately owned land, in fences, corrals, and buildings, we should be the last to wish to harm the range upon which our cattle depend. Nevertheless, the Forest Service keeps a sharp eye upon us to see that we never have more cattle than we are permitted to keep here. We never know when officials from that Bureau may descend upon us to look over our range and, if they see fit, call for a count of our cattle.

In the spring we had a visit from an ‘expert’ (self-styled), who spent a day and a half in riding over our range of twenty-two thousand acres, and reported that our allotment had too many cattle upon it. Charlie stoutly denied this, and when two more Forest officers came to examine our range, he rode with them, and they went away satisfied that there was a great deal of old grass on the hillsides which our cattle had left untouched. This proved that the cows had as much

forage as they needed and had left plenty 'on the plate for Mr. Manners.'

In spite of this later 'range reconnaissance,' there was a lingering doubt in some bureaucratic minds as to the number of cattle that were being carried on the Rak range. When our cattle come down from the hillsides each day for water and hang about to lie in the shade and chew their cud before reascending to the grassy slopes and mesas, they eat the grass on the floor of the canyons and near the watering-places. From the automobile road, which parallels the river-bank, the ground looks bare of forage, and those who have never climbed the hills may easily fancy that they also are bare of feed.

We had heard rumblings and rumors and were not surprised to learn that a count of our cattle had been ordered. Charlie replied at once to the official announcement, requesting that the count be made at the time of our fall branding, so our cattle need not be 'worked' twice. To gather cattle, corral them, drive them from their accustomed pastures and break into their habits is likely to take off the pounds of fat that they will need to carry them through the winter in good condition. We like to disturb the cattle as seldom as possible and then handle them gently, not running them, scaring, or otherwise 'chousing' them.

This request as to the time for the count was acceptable to the Forest Service and a date was set in September, so that the counting might be over and the branding likewise before our range was invaded by deer-hunters.

In the valleys and on an unforested, foothill range, a cattle count, like a branding, is a matter of a very few days. On such a range a round-up is made which, in miniature, resembles the great ones of the era of the open range, B.F.—Before Fences.

On our range the situation is not so simple. Deep, heavily

wooded canyons, separated by rough, treeclad ridges, make it difficult to find the cattle quickly. The great pastures into which our range is divided must be gone over twice or three times in succession in order to make sure that every animal has been found.

The men who were being sent to count our cattle would be here for many days, and I was very glad to know that they were to establish a camp of their own in an adobe cabin, formerly a Ranger Station, which is located by a spring about a mile from our house. Instead of having to cook for them, as I had feared I might have to do, I should not even have to help with the branding unless I chose. Usually I fetch the running-irons, the vaccine, the Burdizzo castrators, the oil to smear on the fresh brands, all in their turn. While Charlie and his cowboy are busy roping, bull-dogging, and tying down more calves with their 'piggin'-strings,' I put fresh wood on the branding-fire and see that the branding-irons are heating.

This year, with extra men riding and helping, I should be neither needed nor wanted. The branding and counting that went on in the corrals which are built in each far-off canyon, I should not even see. When the work was being done at the Home Ranch, I could climb up to the top plank of the chute and there sit and look on 'like a little lady.'

Two days before the men were to arrive, a truck came with their supplies; beds, cooking-pots, and groceries. The driver stopped here on his way to the old Ranger Station and left with me a five-gallon can of green paint.

'What in the world is that green paint for?' I asked, when Charlie came in.

He laughed. 'That's to smear on each animal that is corralled so that it will not be counted a second time if it is again caught in the round-up.'

'How horrid the poor cows will look!'

'No, they won't,' promised Charlie. 'I don't want any oil-

painted cows running loose on the range. I'll tell the Forest Service that we'll bob the tails of the cows instead.'

Losing the long curl of hair at the end of her tail does not hurt a cow or her appearance, and I was easily reconciled to that.

'Don't worry over this counting business, Mary,' continued Charlie. 'We have no more cattle on the Forest than we are entitled to carry under the permit. I'm glad they are going to find that out and be done with it. We're getting off easy. Think of Bill Morley!'

W. R. Morley, usually known as Bill, had a large ranch in New Mexico, and a part of his range was on the National Forest. During the hard times for cattlemen in the year nineteen hundred and twenty-one, he was being harassed by the War Finance Corporation, to which he owed money. He was president and a large stockholder of a bank in Magdalena, and the bank was in difficulties because its borrowers were cattle and sheep men whose loans were not sufficiently liquid to please the bank examiners.

One year Bill Morley was ready to start his fall round-up. The chuck-wagon had been loaded by the cook, and the cowboys were on hand to start work early in the morning, when a number of Government men turned up, fetching beds and saddles, and announced that they were all going out with the round-up. The Forest officers were going to count the cattle with the idea that Morley might have too many on his allotment; the War Finance men were going to count with the idea that perhaps there were too few cattle to secure their loan, while the bank examiners had sent men to count the cattle with the general idea of finding out the financial solvency of their owner.

Bill Morley sent his horse-wrangler out to fetch in extra horses on which to mount some of his self-invited companions. He also held a confidential confab with the

round-up cook. In the morning the work started at day-break.

The hungry men gathered around the chuck-wagon for the first meal on the range.

‘Come and get it!’ yelled the cook.

They came and they got it: boiled cabbage, sour-dough biscuits baked with mutton tallow, Mexican beans, which were seasoned with tallow, black coffee.

After three such meals in succession, five of the Government men decided that there was no pressing need of making a count of the Morley cattle, and left in haste. Two men were under orders to remain, and they had no regrets when the cook brought out beef and canned goods for his diminished family.

Each night, when Charlie returned from a long day's ride, gathering, branding, and counting the cattle, he was in excellent spirits. They were finding many cattle — but not too many. Cottonwood Canyon, Red Rock, Brushy, Main and North Fork all yielded their expected number of calves for the branding and long, curly tails for the tallying. There remained only Fern Canyon, Natural Bridge, and the river bottom near home to be rounded-up, and that is the most open and easily worked part of our range. On the three days devoted to this lower country, I cooked dinner for all hands, having it ready when the men rode in about two o'clock with the cattle they had gathered.

Leaving the cattle in the water-lot with blocks of salt to lick, the men ate their dinner and had a smoke while I washed the dishes. Then I followed them over to the corrals and climbed up on my perch on the chute to watch the branding and counting.

First making sure that there were no stray cattle in the bunch which had managed to get in from some other, neighboring range, the calves were separated from their mothers

and Charlie branded the calves alternately with A Cross L
O

and C R, and he wrote the tally of the calves in his notebook so that he may know just what we have on the range when selling time comes. With so much extra help, the work went along swiftly, roping, flanking, branding, castrating, ear-marking, vaccinating, and the bobbing of the calves' tails. Then the cows were driven into a small corral in which they had little room to run. Charlie and Ramón each opened a formidable stockman's jack-knife with a long keen blade. As the cows milled about in that restricted space, the tails were grasped by the left hand and the curl was cut off by the right hand. When this had been done for every animal, all the cattle were thrown together. Then they were allowed to pass through a gate, one by one, and, as they went by, they were counted by Charlie and also by the Forest Ranger in charge of the count. After that the outer gates were thrown open and the cattle gladly went back to their accustomed haunts.

The count was all over. There had been even fewer cattle tallied than we had under permit, enough fewer to offset the possibility that there might still be a few head left out here and there in some secluded nook in the Forest.

Then up spoke the man who had been in command of the cattle-counting. He had been standing a little apart, pondering.

'I haven't seen a steer on your range,' he said abruptly, 'not even a yearling. How about it?'

'There isn't one here as far as I know,' replied my husband.

'Where are they?'

'Over in the San Simón Valley on pasture,' answered Charlie calmly. 'For several years I have been taking our steers over there as soon as they were weaned, and keeping them there until they were sold.'

‘Why didn’t you tell us so?’ asked the Ranger.

‘Nobody ever asked me,’ said Charlie.

‘Well,’ snapped the Forest officer, ‘if we had known all that, we needn’t have made the count at all!’

Then he and his companions rode away.

Ramón came back from the well with two big buckets of water and doused their contents on the branding-fire.

‘I wish those Señores Rangers would count the cattle for us every year,’ he announced, as steam rose in a cloud and coals hissed beneath the deluge of cold water.

‘Why in the world do you wish that?’ I asked.

‘Because the work is so easy with so many men,’ explained Ramón. ‘They were a big help with the branding.’



XXIII. 'PURTY SALTY!'

CHARLIE is one of those who take time by the fore-lock. Six weeks before it was time to cut our hay, he examined the ancient mowing-machine which has been on the ranch much longer than we, and needs careful nursing. He removed a part which was cracked and looked as though it might break at any moment. This he took to town so that a local dealer might order one just like it. That seemed a simple matter because of a number cast in the iron itself. The part arrived in due time, neatly enclosed in a package, and Charlie did not bother to inspect it. When he was ready to use the mower, he untied the wrappings and found within a piece of iron that was intended for a machine of quite a different model from our own. He was greatly incensed by this piece of carelessness, which would keep us from cutting our Sudan grass during weather exceptionally fine for haying.

He made ready to go to town at once, declaring as he left,

'When I see the fellow who ordered that part for me, I'll tell him why the boar ate the cabbage!'

I had expected to ride that morning. My horse was saddled and the dogs lay there watching him, their tails waving gently to and fro, anticipating a good run. They were as disappointed as I when I unsaddled the horse, turned him out, and came home to change into a dress. It was possible that a man would come with whom my husband had some business and I must attend to the affair — provided the man would allow me to do so.

Sometimes, after handling some unimportant business matter with a man during Charlie's temporary absence, I go to the mirror and scan my countenance anxiously, wondering if I really look as foolish and incompetent as these men seem to think me. On the ranch is an unfortunate cow who has been named Ballasa, because of a bullet which a careless hunter once sent through her lower jaw. Her mouth is always hanging open; she drools; she looks almost as foolish as the deer-hunter who shot her. After an encounter with some man who assumes that I am incapable of the simplest business transaction, I even fancy that I must resemble that poor cow.

A wood-hauler rushed up to the house one day on foot and wrung his hands in despair upon learning that my husband was not at home. After persuasion he revealed that his trailer had parted company with his car and he needed a bolt and nut with which to reunite them. When he found that I could actually open the door of the blacksmith's shop with a key and find therein a bolt of suitable length and a nut to fit it, his surprise and delight were extremely unflattering.

'That man's own wife must be a congenital idiot!' I muttered when he had departed.

Charlie had been gone for some time when the young son of one of our neighboring ranchers drove in with a truck. He, too, was disconsolate and bewildered upon finding me alone.

He had been sent here in haste to see if he could get a dozen long juniper posts to use for a cattle-loading chute that his father was building. Now he mourned because, owing to Charlie's absence, the long trip up here had been made for nothing.

'Four men will lose their day's work,' he declared. 'The chute cannot be finished —'

I broke into his lamentations with a question.

'What length posts do you want?'

Sadly he told me.

'Drive your truck over to the water-lot,' I suggested, 'and you may have your pick from the pile of posts stored there.'

'What will Mr. Rak say if I take them while he is gone?' the boy asked apprehensively.

'He'll say that he wanted your father to have them, of course,' I replied, laughing. 'He and I have this arrangement between us, when he drives out through the gate, I am to run the ranch until he gets back.'

That is precisely how we manage our affairs. Naturally we discuss together all important matters that are likely to come up. For the rest I do as well as I can with the amount of brains which God gave to me — and to the 'road-runner.' Every man who comes here to work for us is told that my orders must be obeyed, and when I am guilty of a mistake in judgment, I am told of it, but the man is not.

When our young neighbor had driven off with the posts, saying to the last, 'I hope Mr. Rak won't mind my taking 'em,' I came into the house in time to answer the telephone. To my great surprise I heard Charlie's voice over the wire. He was telephoning from the Spear E Ranch, where he had gone at the suggestion of Mr. Krentz, in the forlorn hope that he might be able to snatch the part he needed from one of the two decrepit, broken-down mowing-machines which were lying abandoned there.

Small twigs cracked and sparks fell in showers like the fading of a skyrocket.

‘What are you going to do about it?’ I asked Charlie, who is usually able to do something about everything.

‘Not a thing,’ he replied. ‘There was enough rain with that lightning to dampen the ground around the tree. The sparks can do no harm, and there isn’t a breath of wind. We’ll watch it for a while to see if a big limb falls.’

We found seats on two boulders by the river-bank and sat with faces upturned to the fire. Another car was heard coming up the road and soon two Forest fire-guards joined us; they likewise decided that nothing immediate could be done and sat down to smoke and chat. I like talking as well as anybody — but not at three o’clock in the morning. I cannot even listen intelligently at that hour, and I stole away from the men to doze in the seat of our car, screened from the flames by the intervening trees. Charlie joined me there presently, and we drove home to catch what sleep we could before the sun rose, leaving the Forest guards to their vigil. I saw the tree after they felled it. Prone in the river bottom lay the giant pine, awaiting slow decay and, at last, a flood to sweep its shattered trunk down the river.

Not all our fires end so swiftly, and it is difficult to realize what tiny sparks may start a blaze that sweeps across a mountain-side.

José Nuñez was working for us last summer, and one noon he called to Charlie, asking him to come out to the water-lot and look at a little white plume of smoke, far on the slope above North Fork.

‘Put up some lunch for us, Mary, please,’ said Charlie when he returned to the house, ‘and give us a first-aid kit and two canteens. José and I are going to a fire.’

By the time the horses were saddled, I had the knapsack packed, ready to be hung on the saddle-horn while they rode

'Where is Mr. Rak?' he demanded without preface.

'He is not at home.'

'How soon will he be here?'

'I don't know when he'll be back,' I said. 'I am Mrs. Rak. If you will tell me what you want, perhaps I can attend to any business you may have with him.'

The stranger looked at me haughtily, and, if I found no favor in his eyes, we were quits, for he found none in mine. He was tall, fair, with 'fishy' blue eyes; portly in spite of his comparative youth; a man more accustomed to the soft seat of an automobile than to the saddle or 'shankses' mare.' His hat, which he had not removed, was cocked to one side, and he stood with one hand on the open door of his car as though he intended to leave me as soon as possible. For me that could not possibly be too soon.

'Where can I find Mr. Rak?'

'He will be in Douglas for a while this afternoon. Just where I can't say.'

'I may miss him!' fumed the stranger with an impatient gesture. 'Then I'll have to come all the way out here again.'

Certainly that was the last thing I desired.

'If you will tell me what you want,' I persisted, 'I can at least tell you whether or not it will be worth while for you to come back.'

With the exasperated tone of a man who feels that he is being goaded into an indiscretion, he revealed that he had come out here with the intention of selling to Charlie some new kind of medicated salt for cattle. We had seen it advertised as a sure cure for any ailments that a cow may already have and a preventive against any others to which she may fall a victim.

'Mr. Rak is already using a medicated salt that we buy here locally,' I said. 'I am sure he would not care to change.'

He ignored my reply utterly.

'How many head of cattle does he run?' demanded the 'salt-seller.'

My jaw dropped. If ever I looked like that Ballasa cow, it was at that moment. To ask how many cattle one owns is simply not done in our country. It is the equivalent of asking a merchant the value of the stock on his shelves; the investor the number of bonds or shares in his safe-deposit box; or of inquiring baldly of anyone, 'How much money are you worth?'

We excuse the *faux pas* when it is made innocently by a tenderfoot who does not realize that he is being presumptuous, and on such occasions we answer the query by some gently evasive phrase. This man before me, who was travelling around the cow-country, doing business with stockmen, must be asking deliberately because he thought a woman might be foolish enough to tell him. Still, it might be ignorance on his part, and I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

'We have just a few head,' I answered civilly.

His face reddened, and I knew that he was well aware that he should not have asked the question. Yet he repeated it.

'I want to know how many cows Mr. Rak has so I can tell how many tons of salt he should use in a year — if you know what I mean.'

'How many cattle we own is something that we tell only to the tax assessor,' I answered with an air of finality.

'I don't care how many cattle you have!' he shouted. 'I don't care if you have two head or two thousand! It's nothing to me at all!'

'Nothing to you at all,' I agreed amiably.

He jumped into the car, slammed the door violently, and drove away at a furious pace.

"'Perty salty" himself!' I commented, just as we do when cattle are huffy. Then I went back to my cold sweet-potato with my good humor entirely restored.

When Charlie arrived home after dark, he, too, was in the best of spirits. A storm had suddenly blown up out of nowhere, as sometimes happens in the early fall, and rain was descending steadily upon the hayfield.

'I owe a vote of thanks to the fellow who sent me the wrong part for my mower,' Charlie asserted happily. 'If he had sent the right one, I'd have a lot of my hay cut and lying on the ground in the rain right now.'

'Did you happen to run across a man who is traveling around selling salt?' I asked as we sat down to a belated supper.

'Yes, I did. He was grouchy because he had not found me at home, and said he had wasted an hour looking around for me in town besides. I told him that he could have found out from you that we didn't want to buy his salt.'

'He asked me how many head of cattle we run,' I remarked.

'The nerve of the fellow!' exclaimed my husband. 'What did you tell him?'

Laughingly I answered. 'I told him why the boar ate the cabbage.'



XXIV. SELLING CATTLE IN YUMA

SANTIAGO presented himself at our back door very early one cold December morning and looked at me piteously with one lack-luster eye. The other was swathed in a piece of dingy Turkish toweling.

‘*Buenas días, Señora,*’ he croaked mournfully. ‘Ramón tells me that you have a machine for taking things out of the eye.’

‘Yes, Santiago, I have one,’ I replied.

Mexicans frequently lack a Spanish name for the things used by Americans and call everything indiscriminately *una maquina*, a machine.

‘A little piece of oak bark flew into my eye yesterday while I was chopping wood,’ continued Santiago, reluctantly unwinding the towel.

‘Why didn’t you come over here right away and let me take it out?’ I asked, looking into the inflamed, bloodshot eye.

Santiago merely grunted, and squatted down on the ground near the door, waiting resignedly for me to do my worst. With the odious briskness of a hospital nurse who is fetching some noxious dose, I mixed boiled water with a few drops of witchhazel and filled a tiny blue-glass eye-cup. When I went outside, holding it in my hand, Santiago looked at it with his good eye and shied like a nervous colt.

'It is only a cupful of warm water with a little soothing medicine,' I explained. 'See! This is the way to use it.'

I demonstrated by plunging my own eye into the cup.

Santiago took it then, thinking it a preliminary bath before the real operation, and when his eye was immersed, I told him to open and close it a number of times. Then I examined the eye again, removed the offending speck of bark from the corner of the lower lid and showed it to him, lying on a bit of gauze.

'There it is — all out,' said I.

Santiago jumped to his feet. His broad shoulders shook with the escape of his rusty, creaking, disused laughter. In all the years that we have known him, his only sign of mirth has been something between a grunt and a 'Ha!'

'Ramón said you had a machine,' he chuckled, pointing at the eye-cup, 'and I lay awake all last night, being afraid of that!'

Although Santiago arrived at sunup, I had already been awake four hours. The alarm clock roused us at three o'clock in the morning, and at four Charlie had started on a long automobile drive across the entire State of Arizona to Yuma.

For years we have been hearing it said that the 'breeders' (we are breeders) should get in direct touch with the 'feeders,' the men who fatten cattle for sale as finished beef. Charlie was now trying to do so. Cattle were very hard to sell through the usual channels; there were hardly any cattle-

buyers and the most of those who came here were 'sharp-shooters,' looking for bargains. When December found us with our cattle still unsold, Charlie drove to Bisbee and asked Mr. Shattuck, president of the Miners' and Merchants' Bank, to advise him as to the possibility of selling cattle to the farmers and feeders of Yuma Valley, where there was a branch of that bank. Mr. Shattuck gave to Charlie a letter of introduction to Dick Edwards, manager of the Yuma branch, and wished him good luck.

Mr. Edwards introduced Charlie to several farmers and cattle-feeders, and among them was Joe Johannsen, one of the pioneers of Yuma Valley, who knew everybody and offered to take Charlie around from ranch to ranch. They were in the midst of the selling campaign when Yuma was visited by a snowstorm. The Indians had a legend of a snow that had fallen there eighty years before — there had been none since — and all business halted while men, women, and children marveled over the novelty of snow among the date-palms of Yuma. Many of the natives, both white and Indian, had never before seen snow anywhere.

The barns of Yuma Valley were bursting with grain that the farmers had been unable to sell, and in the great, green fields of alfalfa were haystacks of monstrous size. Charlie was able to contract our own cattle and those of our neighbors, the Krentzes; and he brought home with him two men from Yuma Valley who bought cattle from our other neighbors. Soon Charlie went over to the Spear E's to help gather cattle of our own and of the Krentzes and ship them to Yuma.

While working in the lower pasture of the Spear E range, the men were camped for several days in a lumber house which was hardly better than being right out-of-doors. Wind whistled through the loosely battened walls and beneath the floor. The two-roomed house shook with each gust that blew across the flat country that we call 'the baldys.'

Although baled hay and sacks of grain were piled along the walls to cover the largest cracks, the two stoves could not warm the place. At night the bedclothes fluttered in the wind until 'Bill' Lutley, an old-time cowman, roped his bed covers down to the cot to keep them from being blown off of him. Two fifty-pound blocks of stock-salt, placed one on the other with a grain sack on top, were the only chairs, and all the other furnishings were in keeping.

In spite of all this, perhaps because of it, one of the men in the camp was enjoying himself immensely. That was Brainard Page, a New Yorker, who had left a comfortable home in the Geneseo Valley to revel in this 'home on the range.' Everything interested him and each day he learned something new; how to wear woolen socks on his hands on frosty mornings instead of leather gloves; how to make biscuits and cook cowboy steaks. He watched Charlie make gravy one noon; flour browned in bacon-fat, cold water stirred in to cook until it thickened. The next day Brainard tried to make gravy himself — and made flour paste instead, because he had added boiling water instead of cold.

The train on which the cattle were to be shipped left Bernardino Station very early in the morning and the cattle had to be inspected before being loaded. On a windy, cold December morning, the men rose so early that they had the light of the moon by which to gather the cattle which had been left overnight in a little pasture called a 'shipping-trap.' Before the moon sank out of sight, the herd was strung out along the pasture fence, and their hoofs went click-clacking as they walked on the frozen ground.

Brainard Page rode behind the cattle, keeping up the drags. It was so dark that men, horses, and cattle were but moving shadows, and the northwest wind was biting like a frozen lash.

'Brainard,' said Charlie, 'there is something wrong with

the head of a man who would get up at two o'clock in the morning to help drive cattle over frozen ground when he could stay in a nice, warm bed.'

'I'm having the time of my life!' cried Brainard with undimmed enthusiasm.

Christmas was only a few days distant when the cattle were shipped to Yuma, and Charlie came home to warm himself once more by the fireplace in a snug adobe house. One still, sunny afternoon we saddled our horses and rode a mile down the canyon to see our bachelor neighbor, Mr. Heyne, whom all the Mexicans call *Tio Manzana* (Uncle Apple) because of his apple orchard.

In spring and summer our cattle cast longing glances through the fence into Mr. Heyne's pasture, which is an earthly paradise for cows. The river runs through it, between tree-shadowed banks where cattle may lie at midday to chew their cud. On one side of the river is a meadow, edged with trees. On the other, a grassy hillside catches the sun in early morning when cattle leave their bed-grounds to graze.

For years Mr. Heyne has been making experiments in grafting. He grafts walnuts of all varieties upon our native trees, whose nuts have a tiny kernel, hidden in a shell like iron. He has raised chestnuts on oak trees and bunches of large, cultivated grapes on the wild-grape vines. On account of the grafts, he does not like to have cattle in his place during the summer. After a frost has nipped the leaves of the walnuts, turning them black, and the wild-grape vines are bare, our cattle are invited inside to eat the grass.

Long ago we built an extra fence a few feet outside the one that surrounds Mr. Heyne's apple orchard, as the cows always forsook the grass for the forbidden pleasure of stretching their necks and nibbling his trees. If there were cows in the Garden of Eden, I marvel that there was an apple left for Eve. Also we are careful to put only dry cows in Mr. Heyne's

pasture so that he may not be disturbed by the bawling of calves and their mothers. I had been somewhat surprised, therefore, when he telephoned me that he had been kept awake half the night by a cow.

'I can't see what she was bawling for,' I said apologetically, 'but we will take her out of your place today if you know which one she is.'

'The cow wasn't bawling,' he explained. 'She just hung around near the house all night, jingling her bell.'

We found that by good fortune the offending bell was being worn by a very gentle cow who is named Little Red Sister, because she harks back to a Durham ancestor and has not a single white hair. Her mother died when she was born and she was raised in the corral as the 'dogie' foster-child of a milk cow. When we rode up close to her, Charlie dismounted, and the cow stood still while he unbuckled the leather strap about her neck and relieved her of the bell. Any other cow in the pasture would have had to be roped and thrown down, or fetched all the way home to be put in the chute.

We rode on to Mr. Heyne's house, the bell dangling and jingling on Charlie's saddle-horn, and asked him if we might leave it until some other time.

'Certainly you may leave it,' replied Mr. Heyne, who came out to meet us. 'I've got plenty of room now.'

We all laughed at that. Mr. Heyne has recently moved into a brand-new house, fifty feet from his old one, from which he was at last evicted by his own belongings. In the course of many years, during which he constantly brought things into his old house and threw nothing out, his own movements became more and more restricted until in his living-room there remained only a narrow path from door to fireplace and bed. A like path connected the stove, table, and cupboard with a door to the outside world. Tin tobacco

boxes, carefully labeled with their contents, clung like bats to the ceiling and superfluous articles, which had found no resting-place within the house, were suspended from nails in the outer wall, partially sheltered by the overhanging eaves. At this stage, Mr. Heyne did the only thing possible. He built a new house for himself and left the old one to his innumerable possessions.

Mr. Heyne is the brother of Mrs. Frank Moore, and as the Moores were visiting in California, we invited him to our house for Christmas dinner. He declined the invitation instantly, but that did not trouble us. He always declines our invitations to holiday dinners. We say nothing more until the morning of the holiday, when I telephone to him and say very rapidly, 'Mr. Heyne, Charlie will be down at twelve o'clock to bring you up here to dinner.' Then I hang up the telephone before he can reply and refuse to answer it when he tries to ring me. Always he is ready when Charlie goes for him and he professes to enjoy the meal.

The morning after we had taken the bell from the neck of our Little Red Sister, Mr. Heyne again telephoned to me.

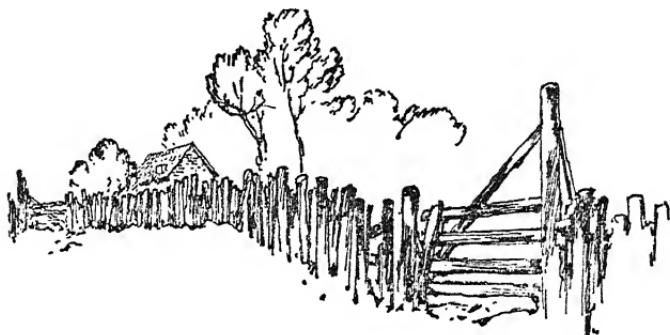
'If you do not need that cowbell right away,' he said, 'I'd like to use it for a while.'

'Of course you may keep it as long as you like,' I replied. 'We have lots of them.'

My curiosity was aroused. Mr. Heyne has no cow to hang a bell on; no one to call to dinner.

'I've been troubled by a rat,' he continued. 'It scratches and gnaws beneath the floor of my bedroom and wakes me up. Last night I rang that bell as soon as he started gnawing. It scared him so that he hasn't been back since.'

'I know what the rat thought,' said I: 'At last! Someone has belled the cat!'



XXV. THE FIRST GRANDCHILD

RAMÓN CHAVEZ opened the gate to our dooryard at dusk on a beautiful winter day and walked in, leading his spirited chestnut-sorrel horse, Jumbo. Tottering before Ramón, guided by his hand and propelled from behind by his knee, there entered also a gaunt, feeble, baby calf. It had been born out of season and its days could not have numbered more than seven. The calf was too exhausted and hungry to fear our dogs when they rushed out to bark at this small intruder in the one enclosure on the ranch that is forbidden to cattle.

Smiles radiated from Ramón's kind, black face.

'I have been two hours coming one mile with this little calf,' said Ramón, stroking the bony creature gently. 'I found him by Blue Spring, bawling beside his dead mother. Jumbo jumped and shied when I lifted the calf in my arms and tried to put it in the saddle. So we walked for a while, then we both rested under a tree while I smoked a cigarette. Sometimes I carried the calf where the trail was rough. Now!

Here we are. See, Señora, how dry his little nose is and how caked? Have you some milk we could give him from a bottle?"

I warmed some milk and poured it into a long-necked bottle. Ramón squatted on the ground with his arm about the calf's neck and held the bottle in its mouth until the famished creature had swallowed every drop, and butted Ramón with its head, which is the calf way of saying 'More! More!'

'Tomorrow morning I shall put this calf on one of the young Holstein cows,' planned Ramón. 'She will give plenty of milk for two calves if she is well fed.'

Carrying the calf in his arms, the man walked over to the barn and I followed, leading Jumbo. Before I left the barn, Ramón had made a nest of hay in the saddle-house, where the calf, its sides now paunched out with warm milk, fell asleep instantly.

When my husband came home that night, I told him all of this and we agreed that we were very fortunate in having a man to work for us who loved cattle and took a real interest in the ranch. Early on the very next morning, Ramón came over to our house and broke the news to Charlie that he wanted to quit and to leave the ranch as soon as possible.

'What the devil!' exclaimed Charlie. 'I thought you were well satisfied and wanted to stay here.'

'I do want to stay here. I like this job and I am very contented to work for you,' answered poor Ramón, his lips quivering and tears standing in his eyes. 'But how can a man work with pleasure when he comes home day after day and finds his wife everlastingly crying? Manuéla has made up her mind that she wants to go back to town to live. I have told her that there is no work in town; jobs are hard to find and we may go hungry. It is no use. She just cries all day and talks about going for half the night. There will be no peace until I give in to her and go.'

This was by no means the first time that a dissatisfied woman had cost us a good man. We should be used to that, but we liked Ramón exceptionally well, so felt the blow more than usual. Ramón told us that he knew a very good young cowboy, Roberto Flores, who was out of work, and he sent this man to us.

It was night when Roberto and his young wife arrived and I did not see them until the following morning. I liked the looks of the young couple very much. The man was active and intelligent. He had been married only a few months and his wife, Carlóta, a dainty, town-bred girl, still wore her bridal finery. I feared that she would not be contented here, so far from her friends and family, but she took to country life at once. I found her in the corrals, admiring the colts; in the pasture, looking at the baby calves. Soon she had a kitten and a puppy for company during the long hours when Roberto was riding the range.

The week-ends were great occasions for Carlóta. She made tall stacks of *tortillas*, cooked a great pot of beans, cleaned her house, and then dressed in her best print frock and one of the aprons she had embroidered before she was married. Each Saturday night after dark we heard a motor, shouting, laughter, and knew that Carlóta's mother and others of her family had come to visit her. All night they sat up and gossiped, laughed, sang, and drank coffee. On Sunday they roamed about the ranch, feasted at midday, and went home in the late afternoon with their car laden with dry sticks which they had gathered for firewood.

One day I went to Douglas and on the principal street of the town I met a group of Mexican women, one of whom stopped to speak to me. It was Manuélá Chavez, mournful, sour-visaged, and shabby. She introduced her companions, who proved to be the mother and sisters of our new vaquero. Señora Flores was a stately woman, in long black garments,

surmounted by a black fringed mantilla. The younger women wore cheaply fashionable dresses and hats. I expressed my pleasure at meeting them, and Señora Flores, in voluble and elegant Spanish, overwhelmed me with questions about her son Roberto.

'It is terrible, terrible to have my son so far away from me!' she exclaimed with rising emotion.

'He is not very far from you,' I replied, laughing. 'Carlota's mother and sisters often visit them. I know they will be glad to have you come, too.'

To my consternation the woman's face was instantly convulsed; she trembled, sobbed, clutched the fringe of her silken mantilla and drew it over her face. While her daughters gathered around her with great solicitude, I murmured a hasty farewell and fled, fearing a scene on the street. On my return to the ranch I asked Carlota if I could possibly have said something to distress Roberto's mother.

'Oh, no,' replied Carlota in her stilted, schoolgirl English. 'The mo-thair of Roberto ees all-ways cry-eeng.'

Reverting to her familiar Spanish, she told me about Roberto's family. There are two sons and six daughters in the Flores family and their mother wanted them all to remain single and at home. The thought of allowing her girls to go out to work was out of the question, although the father finds it hard to support them. These closely guarded señoritas were not even allowed to go to the nearest shop to buy *chili* for the *enchiladas* unless the mother accompanied them. If a young man succeeded in becoming acquainted with one of the girls and called upon her, he rarely ventured to pay a second visit. Behind the high adobe wall that surrounded their mother's garden, the six girls passed their lives as monotonously as in a cloister.

'Why do they put up with it?' I asked Carlota.

'What else can they do? Of course they are unhappy, but

they are as helpless as babies. They do not speak English. They do not know how to earn money; and if a boy so much as looks at one of them, Señora Flores begins to cry and scream and put her hand on her heart and shriek that it will kill her to give up one of her children.'

When Roberto had finally mustered up courage to tell his mother that he intended to marry Carlota, she wept, flung herself back and forth and screamed, 'Carlota is a wicked girl! A bad girl!'

Roberto was unmoved by his mother's hysterics and coldly asked, 'If Carlota is a wicked girl, why have you allowed her to come to your house and be the friend of my sisters?'

On the day of their marriage, she paced up and down her garden, screaming that she had been robbed of her son and that she would never consent to see her daughter-in-law.

'Who will take care of all these six daughters when their father is old, or dies — if they do not marry?' I asked.

Carlota shrugged her slender shoulders in typically Mexican fashion. 'I suppose they will all want to live with Roberto and me,' she answered, 'but by that time Roberto will have a family of his own to support.'

I had surmised that before long Roberto and Carlota would have their first child. Now I was sure.

Ramón and Manuél Chavez came out here one day for a visit. Manuél told Carlota that she was very sorry that she and Ramón had ever left here, and she cried dismally. A day or so later I heard the arrival of a noisy, clattering automobile; feminine screams; outbursts of laughter, and the hearty shouts of men drifted across the creek from our vaquero's cabin. When I next saw Roberto, he was beside himself with joy.

'My mother has come to see us!' he cried. 'And my brother and four of my sisters!'

'Aha!' thought I. 'Manuél has told Señora Flores that

Carlóta is going to have a baby and she wants to make friends with her so she may have a claim on her grandchild.'

In the late afternoon, I heard our dogs barking in a friendly fashion and found them circling around a group of Mexican women who were coming to our house. This was a visit of ceremony. Señora Flores, tall, stately, with a gliding walk and long, flowing draperies, entered the living-room and was conducted to the seat of honor, the great armchair by the fireplace. She was calm, arrogant, and at the same time gracious. Carlóta beamed with happiness at being restored to favor by Roberto's mother and she did her modest share of the talking as became a young matron. The four Señoritas Flores did not venture to join in the conversation, but they looked as though they were enjoying this break in their dull lives within the adobe wall of their mother's garden. Isabella and Evangelina had their mother's long, proud, Spanish features and her spare, erect form. In repose their faces were sad and older than their years. Catalina and Juliana were plump and pretty girls in their early twenties, still hopeful of romance. Magdaléna and Luisa, the oldest of the Flores girls, had remained at home with their father, and the mother was voluble in her regret that there had not been room enough in the *truckicito* for her to bring them also.

Carlóta rose first and gave the signal for their departure by saying, with dignity, 'I must go to my house. It is time to cook the supper.'

'We hope you will now come out to the ranch often,' said I, when saying good-bye to Señora Flores, 'especially after Carlóta's baby is born. Will this not be your first grandchild?'

'*Gracias, Señora,*' she replied complacently. 'Yes, this will be my first grandchild.'

We were not at all surprised when Roberto told us two weeks later that he must leave us. His father had found a

job for him as a milker in a dairy near Douglas, and his mother wanted to have Carlota near her when the baby was born.

'My mother-in-law is a changed woman,' Carlota told me with much pride. 'She now says that she would like to have another daughter-in-law, six sons-in-law, and lots and lots and lots of grandchildren. She is taking all of her girls to dances, and already she worries for fear that Magdalena and Luisa are so old that no man will want them!'



XXVI. GENTLING THE COLTS

ROBERTO'S departure caused us no inconvenience, for Ramón Chavez said he would be very glad to come back to work if we would have him. Manuéla was now as anxious to leave town as she had been to go there, beans having been none too plentiful there as Ramón had warned her. We were very happy to have Ramón back again. He asked about the cows, the horses, and the burros. Was Antonia fat? Did Tomás still pitch on frosty mornings? What would I take for Æohippus? The last question is an old jest, because I always answer that I will not take a million dollars for that fat pony.

A few days after Ramón's return, Charlie went to town for a load of grain. We watched him drive through the gate and heard him cross the creek, the truck protesting loudly with rattles and squeaks as it bumped across the rocky river-bed. Then Ramón turned to me with the pleased air of a conspirator whose long-awaited moment has arrived.

'You have, hanging up in the house, a hackamore made of hair-rope?' He whispered the question, although Charlie was already a quarter of a mile beyond earshot.

I confessed to having such a hackamore suspended from the wall of our living-room, together with a variety of quirts, headstalls of platted rawhide, hair-ropes, worn-out riatas which can no longer be trusted to hold a big calf, and now are cherished parlor ornaments.

Ramón took down the hackamore and appraised it from all sides. It was a home-made headstall of grayish-white horsehair rope. Instead of a steel bit, there was a ring of smoothly platted rawhide, a *bozál*, to go around the nose of a horse that had not yet felt iron in his mouth. Under the place where the horse's lower jaw would presently rest, Ramón knotted one end of a new rope of soft white cotton.

'Now, Señora,' he announced, 'you and I will break those two colts, Friday and Mousie!'

'Caramba!' I exclaimed. 'Why didn't you begin riding them while Charlie was here?'

Ramón grinned broadly, white teeth gleaming between black cheeks.

'Because I would not like the *patrón* to see his vaquero pitched off the first thing. You will not tell on me, Señora, if the colts throw me.'

While we use the common expression, 'breaking horses,' we do not really mean it. Ramón's expression is '*amansar los*,' meaning to gentle them by handling, and that is what we do, beginning as soon as they are born when they are colts of our own raising. My part on the first day of real training required neither boots, spurs, nor riding-breeches. I was to serve in the humble capacity of opener-of-gates. In case of trouble I was to be at hand to pick up the pieces. We did not think that these colts would do anything very dreadful. They were three years old and all their lives they had been in and out of the barn and corrals. They had their grain from a feed-box and their hay from the big manger and learned to nibble sugar from an outstretched hand. They

leaned over the yard fence and nickered their disgust when they saw me wasting perfectly good corn by feeding it to the turkeys. No one had ever cast a stick, a mean look, or a harsh word in their direction, and one searing touch of a branding-iron was their sole experience of pain.

As it happens, I was the one who began the 'gentling' of these colts. Three years ago, José Nuñez came in beaming one morning to tell us that one of our mares had given birth to a horse colt the night before. I dashed off on foot to the wooded corner of the South Pasture where the mares were in the habit of grazing and found there a blue-roan colt with a white spot in his forehead, all knobby legs and oversized head, standing by Mora, his gentle, friendly mother. The colt was quite fearless, deer-eyed, curious, willing to let me put my arm about his chubby neck and pat his fuzzy, stumpy tail. I named him for his birthday, Friday.

At a little distance stood another mare, Nellie, the inseparable companion of Mora. She was standing by a clump of oak saplings, looking down intently. I went nearer and gazed too. There, half-hidden by leaves, was a curled-up creature, no larger than a deer and the color of a mouse. I knelt down and stroked the dainty head until, roused by my hand which was playing with her soft ears, the little thing untangled four long legs and rose: a tiny mare colt.

'Mousie!' I exclaimed, christening her. She bobbed her pretty head and tossed her fuzzy mane in assent. Since that day she has belied her name by turning coal black all over, but 'Mousie' she remains, for although she has no petticoat, 'her feet like little mice steal in and out.'

Friday was born first, if only by half a day. He should be saddled first. He stood alone in the corral while Mousie looked over the gate and nickered to him anxiously. Not even a gate had ever separated them before. Ramón went up to Friday's left side, put his arm around the colt's neck,

and slid the rope gently across his shoulders. Nothing new, this. Friday had felt both ropes and human arms before. The loose hackamore was pulled gently over his nose and there was a new sensation as his ears were fitted into their holes in the headstall of the hackamore. Gently it was tied in place, Ramón murmuring Spanish endearments as he worked. Friday wagged his head, decided that the new contrivance did not hurt — so what of it? The long white rope hung from the hackamore and lay at length upon the ground where it could not coil around an unwary leg.

Ramón brought a grain sack from the barn, familiar object with enticing odor of rolled barley. He let Friday sniff at it, then began swishing it gently against the knees, back, and rump of the colt, over and over again, until it was no longer startling. The sack was replaced by the saddle-blankets which were finally landed in their proper place on the colt's back. The saddle was brought forth, a clattering thing, all straps and stirrups, fit to terrify some young horses, but not at all awesome to a colt that had been nibbling slyly at saddle-strings all his life, whenever he could get in where the saddle-rack stands. Ramón gathered up the latigo strap, folded the right stirrup across the seat, and swung the saddle into place so gently that Friday felt nothing more alarming than an extra weight on top of the saddle-blanket. The cinches were then fastened loosely; again the grain sack was swished about, this time under the horse's belly. When he no longer flinched, the stirrup was lowered. Everything had now been done but to pull up the slack of the cinches so that the saddle would be secure. Ramón tightened them suddenly, before the horse could jump away. That was the first abrupt movement that Ramón had made since he began the lesson.

'I am going to take Friday over to the field before I mount,' said Ramón, 'There are no trees for the horse to

run into. The plowed ground is soft for the horse — also for me, if I am thrown off.'

Ramón picked up the long rope which had lain stretched on the ground. I opened the gate and Ramón started out, leading Friday.

'Woo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo!' came a cry over the gate where Mousie was nickering and stamping in frenzy as she saw Friday going farther and farther away.

Friday stopped short and no amount of tugging could budge him.

'Go behind him, Señora, please, and throw a little rock at him,' requested Ramón.

I obeyed and added a piercing yell for good measure.

Out sailed Friday with Ramón in his wake. Ramón 'sat down on the rope' and checked the colt, let him run and checked him again, until we reached the center of the big field. Now the long rope was wound through the knot of the hackamore until it formed a pair of double reins. Ramón took from his pocket a big red bandanna handkerchief and tucked this into the hackamore so that it passed over the horse's eyes and blinded him, yet could be jerked off in an instant after Ramón was mounted. Ramón gathered the reins in his left hand and grasped a handful of Friday's mane. With his right hand he turned the stirrup outward, inserted his toe, grasped the horn, and sprang into the saddle. Then he leaned forward and jerked away the handkerchief.

Friday whirled around and started down the field, found himself pulled up by the reins and turned around in circles, this way, that way. He ran again, was checked, turned, guided by the strong hand on the rein. Friday had no time to meditate mischief — or to meditate at all. Ten minutes of schooling and Ramón rode up to me at the edge of the field and Friday gladly halted, panting and sweating.

'That is enough for the first time,' said Ramón.

To my surprise, he did not dismount, but turned Friday's head toward the barn and the colt took the path with all the eagerness of a veteran horse, homeward bound.

Unsaddling took almost as long as saddling-up. Each step was made slowly, with much swishing of blanket and sack.

'See? The colt is not a bit tired. I would rather he pitched me off than that he should be tired the first few times he is saddled,' said Ramón. 'That spoils a young horse, discourages him — working too hard when he is very young.'

Mousie next. Tossing her head when she felt the rough hair of the hackamore tickling her ears, jumping and whirling in circles when the cinches were tightened, more skittish than her half-brother. On the way to the field she tangled the rope in the trees and she shied at a gate that she had been through a hundred times. All was ready but the mounting — like 'all done but finishing.'

'Señora, would you not like to ride this beautiful little mare?' asked Ramón with a grin, as he tucked the bandanna across Mousie's eyes.

'Thank you, Ramón,' I replied. 'I should like very much to ride her, only I have not my boots and riding-breeches.'

With incredible swiftness Ramón left the ground and took a firm seat in the saddle, snatched the bandanna from the little mare's eyes, and was ready for anything she chose to do. Paralyzed by the strangeness of the things that were happening to her, she stood in the middle of the field, her hoofs planted in the soft earth, head erect, still as a horse of bronze on a pedestal. Presently she turned her head this way and that, apparently to see what had become of Ramón, not yet fully aware that he was on her own back. Mousie seemed to have no idea at all what to do in this strange situation and appealed to Friday for help and advice.

'Woo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo?' (What shall I do-do-do?) she neighed vociferously, throwing back her head, nostrils

‘Come he-he-he-he-here!’ neighed Friday from the distant corral. Straightway she started in his direction until Ramón checked her, made her turn and go in the opposite direction, whirl, trot, walk sedately, whirl again under the compulsion of the closely held rein, until her brief lesson was over.

‘Wheeeeeee! Here I come!’ she called to Friday, when at last she was allowed to choose her own direction. Gravel flew from her neat little hoofs as she headed for the barn at full gallop.

United, freed from saddle, rope, and rein, the colts seemed to feel no resentment against us.

‘I’ll give them some hay now,’ said Ramón, bursting with pride at the progress of his pupils. ‘By and by, when they have cooled off, I’ll take them down to the spring and sponge off their backs with cold water, then give them grain.’

Lovely Mousie, who had been sniffing hopefully in all the empty feed-boxes, came up and nuzzled me, her soft lips touching my ear, as though she were whispering to me, offering to take me for a ride.

‘No, thank you, Mousie,’ I whispered back. ‘You are just a little too lively for me to mount. Some day I shall.’



XXVII. BUYING BULLS

THREE are those who assert that within the past thirty years the cattle business has changed more than in all the rest of the time since Old Testament days, when Jacob, a cowboy, was given a start by Laban, his father-in-law, who allowed him to take as his own 'all the speckled and spotted cattle' in the herd. (Genesis 30. 32.)

To speak of the pastoral life as a business is of itself new. Cattlemen used not to consider themselves business men. Now they watch the market reports as closely as they watch their herds and change their methods with the changing times. Old cowmen who once drove cattle over the trails from the Mexican Border to Wyoming, now truck them as short a distance as twenty miles to the railroad.

Cattlemen are not in competition with one another as are two druggists on opposite corners. We want our neighbors to get a good price for their cattle so that we may ask as much or more for our own. We are glad that we live in a part of the range country where the cattle are of a quality to attract buyers who want the best and are willing to pay for it. Not very

many years ago there was a prevalent price established each spring and fall. All over the breeding country, steers were then sold for twenty dollars, thirty, or even more. That is no longer the case. Buyers now pay by the head, or buy by the pound, in proportion to the breeding and condition of the cattle in each individual herd. The rancher who raises the best cattle 'tops the market.' As to the 'speckled and spotted cattle' mentioned in the Bible, Jacob, if now living, would not accept them even as a gift.

Each year we cull our herd from both ends, selling the less desirable heifers and the old cows. To replace them we keep the very choicest of our heifer calves from each year's calf-crop, selecting these for uniformity, shape, and markings. In this way our cattle gradually grow nearer to the perfection for which we strive; but the chief means of improving a herd is the purchase of pure-bred sires.

Whenever there is a possibility that we may sell enough cattle to cover our necessities and leave a little surplus for the things we regard as luxuries, I am sure to be awakened from my dreams of new linoleum or breakfast plates by hearing my husband say, 'We have to buy a new bunch of bulls this year.'

'Is it possible that we have had the last ones three years?' I cry in dismay.

'Yes. They have been on the range three breeding seasons and they have to go.'

Each time that we buy new sires for our herd, we try to get better ones than before; bulls more nearly resembling those handsome creatures pictured in *The Cattlemen* and *The Hereford Journal*. Bulls must be brought to our ranch as yearlings, so that they may become acclimated and used to climbing about in a rough country before they are full grown. On that account we cannot swap bulls with our neighbors as some ranchers do. The full-grown, heavy animals from a smooth,

valley range would soon become sore-footed and thin if we brought them to the mountains.

The last time we bought bulls they came from a ranch not very far away, and for the first time I could go along with Charlie to help choose them. The Hunt Brothers, from whom we were to buy the bulls, are the five sons of a cowman who came to Arizona from Texas years ago. Some of his sons are over six feet tall and all are above the average height; lean and erect, with high cheek-bones, aquiline noses, and the deep, reddish tan common to horsemen who are out on the range in all weathers. This description serves equally well for Charlie Rak, who has more than once been asked by a stranger, 'Which one of the Hunt boys are you?'

All five of the brothers are partners in stock-raising, and whenever there is a difference of opinion among them in regard to any matter, they agree that 'What Jim says goes.' Charlie Hunt is a doctor in Bisbee, but he has an interest in the cattle just the same. Sam Hunt has for years been inspector in the Los Angeles Stock Yards. Jim, Jack, and Joe stay with the cattle, and, while they all live on the ranch, the extent of their range is so great that their houses are miles apart. We regard the Hunts as our neighbors — Arizona fashion. Their ranch is only nineteen miles from ours on the San Simón side of the Chiricahuas, and only one house lies between us, the Spear E's. However, as there is no road across the mountains, we must drive eighty miles to reach them by automobile.

The Hunt Brothers had bought some registered cows, the RO's, from the San Rafael Ranch, and we were to choose from among the sons of these fine animals. It was arranged that on a certain date, fifty yearling bulls would be corralled at the Malpais Tank, ready for us to make our selection. The Malpais is a lava country, rolling, treeless, where weeds and grass spring up with miraculous speed at the touch of

rain. In it is a lake, five acres in extent, made long ago, in the days of the open range, by building a small dam across a draw to catch water which falls on the rocky hills surrounding it.

Near this lake, called the Malpais Tank, is the 'house that Jack (Hunt) built.' Close by it are big cattle corrals, built from railroad ties, in which the bulls were awaiting us. We stopped first at the house and spoke to Sally Hunt, Jack's wife. She likes cattle fully as well as I do, rides whenever possible, and 'makes a hand' when the men need extra help. She took it for granted that I should go to the corrals with the men, regretting that she could not do so because of cooking the dinner.

Jim and Jack Hunt, Charlie Rak and I went over to look at the yearlings. As we went into the corrals, we each took a stick — not for defense, although we were on foot — but to help us in cutting out of the herd the animals we wanted. The young bulls huddled close together, eyeing us as keenly as we eyed them. We walked among them, scattering them into small groups so we might have a better view of individuals. Just as I was thinking how impossible it would be to make a choice from among animals so beautiful, Jim Hunt said, 'Come on, Mrs. Rak, you can have the first pick.'

Naturally, being a greenhorn, I picked out the largest one, with the laudable intention of getting the most for our money.

'How's that for a pick?' I asked pridefully, when the lone bull had been driven into another corral at my direction.

'Won't do,' said my husband. 'He's a good bull, as good as any here,' he added consolingly, 'but he hasn't enough crest. We must pick bulls as nearly alike as possible and all with a large crest, to make our own herd more uniform.'

The crest is a white fluffy-ruffle of hair on the top of an animal's shoulders, and the more nearly alike one's cattle are, the easier they are to sell.

I retired into a corner and looked on while Charlie made his choice from the herd, one animal at a time. When he had sent into the other corral a few more bulls than we intended buying, we moved in there and again he made his cut, sending unwanted bulls back to the first bunch until there remained only the ones of his final choice, as alike as *frijole* beans.

Then we went to the house, where Mrs. Jack had dinner for us, and I visited with her afterward while the men put our brand on the bulls which we had bought.

All this happened in the spring three years ago, and the bulls were driven here in the following July. The only fault I have to find with them is that I cannot tell them apart, with the sole exception of Torito, whom I fed once when he was sick and who still follows me, hoping for more grain.

Since that day at the Hunt Ranch when I betrayed my lamentable ignorance 'before folks,' Charlie has endeavored to educate me in regard to the points of pure-bred cattle. He calls my attention to the excellencies and faults in our own cows; praising one animal for her short, broad head and short neck; condemning another unfortunate creature for her high tail bone and 'cat hams.' He reads to me the words of wisdom written by eminent breeders and feeders, who tell how an animal of high degree should look. As for instance, 'The top and bottom lines should run parallel with a deep body between those lines — I like a leg set under each corner —'

'Like an old-fashioned grand piano,' I interpolated. That was a sad error on my part. I am supposed to take these instructions very seriously.

I have been able to see a gradual improvement in our own cattle, as selected calves grow up and take their places in the herd and the old and less-desirable cows are sold. We well-nigh burst with pride one spring when twenty of our steers were among those chosen by the University of Arizona for experimental feeding. They were cared for in the most scien-

tific manner by the fledgling cattlemen who were students in the Department of Animal Husbandry. Charlie went over to Tucson to see the steers when they had been stuffed to repletion for months and were regarded as 'finished beef.'

This year the University planned to have a Livestock Show in Tucson and invited the cowmen of Arizona to exhibit cattle there and to come and see them judged.

I went over to Tucson alone on the train a few days before the show, to visit the Frederick Armstrongs and see other friends whom we had known when we lived there, long ago. Charlie planned to drive over the day before the cattle were to be judged.

Several years had passed by since my last train journey and I was far too interested to bury myself in a magazine as seasoned travelers do. At each little station — a few buildings huddled together for company in the vast expanse of mountain and desert — boys and girls flocked into the day coach in which I was seated. It was Sunday afternoon and they were going back to the Teachers' College in Tempe, or the State University in Tucson, after a brief visit at home. They shouted their farewells and waved to their folks, who had driven many miles to the railroad from ranches hidden away in the rugged mountains on either side of the track.

I thought how desolate our country must look to those who were seeing it for the first time through the windows of the Pullman coaches. To the eyes of strangers it may have seemed an unpeopled stretch of sand, rock, and sparse, stunted vegetation. We 'natives,' riding in our shabby, red-plush cushioned chair car, found the landscape friendly and full of significance. We could see little dirt tanks where cattle came to water; windmills whirring in the distance; miles of drift fence climbing up the ridges; faint, rocky roads winding over the hills to some far-off, sheltered spot which was a rancher's home. In a cozy corner of our car sat a fat friendly

'peanut-butcher,' dispensing apples, chocolate bars, and root-beer to the boys and girls and inquiring about their folks in neighborly fashion.

An attractive, bright-eyed little boy of nine or ten years wandered into our car from one of the Pullman coaches and plopped down in the seat opposite me.

'Hello!' he greeted me companionably. 'Where are you going?'

'I am going to Tucson,' I replied.

'Do you live there?'

'No. I live on a cattle-ranch in the mountains above Douglas.'

'I live in Houston,' he confided with civic pride. 'We have cattle in Texas, too.'

Together we looked out of the window at the country through which we were then passing; the rough, broken foot-hills at the base of the Santa Rita Mountains, all scraggy, leafless mesquites and stony gullies, with no touch of color other than the bare reddish soil.

'I don't see what there is here for cows to eat,' commented the small boy, turning a worried face toward me. 'I can't see a bit of feed out there.'

'There will be plenty of green grass and browse and weeds here in another month,' I told him, 'as soon as it grows warmer.'

'Oh! Then the cows will have plenty to eat,' he said with relief. He jumped up. 'Good-bye. I have to go back to my mother.'

Dear little Texan, who worried about the cows!



XXVIII. THE LIVESTOCK SHOW

CHARLIE drove over to Tucson the day before the Livestock Show. We saw many familiar faces when we went with Colonel and Mrs. Armstrong to the grounds where the cattle were to be exhibited. There were a number of people present from our own corner of Cochise County and others whom we knew from all over Arizona. With a few exceptions, the cowmen had left at home their high-heeled boots and leather jackets, but they clung to their big gray felt hats and looked out from under the brim with the far-seeing gaze of the range rider. Even when he is afoot and dressed in his tailored, town-going clothes, there is no disguising a horseman.

Perched high up on the raised benches, which were like miniature football bleachers, were we women of the cow-country, wives and daughters of the cattlemen. Our husbands would have had 'conniption fits' had we ventured into the arena. Yet down in front of us wandered a 'lady dude,' who was evidently having the time of her life, taking pictures of the cattle. She wore elegant riding-togs which would

have been torn to ribbons within an hour on a bushy range in pursuit of a cow.

The first class to be judged filed into the arena, each bull wearing a halter and rope by which his exhibitor led him. These were herd bulls, all over two years old, white-faced Herefords of impeccable ancestry. These curled darlings had been washed, combed, brushed, and groomed in the bovine beauty parlor behind the arena, and they stepped out proudly as they circled about and took places in a line facing us. Each owner now tried to place the feet of his bull so that he would stand squarely, 'a leg set under each corner,' thus presenting the straight back-line which is one mark of quality. Some of the bulls quickly assumed the proper attitude; others had to be made to do so by means of the hooked cane with which the exhibitor moved the hind feet into place.

When every animal was ready, an announcer, who sat in an automobile equipped with a loudspeaker, told us the name of each bull and that of his owner, so that we might identify them by the numbered placards worn by the exhibitors on chest and back.

The judge, Professor Blizzard from Oklahoma, was introduced to us. He then turned his attention to the cattle, and we followed him with our eyes as he went down the line of animals. At first he walked behind the bulls, stopping beside each to pull the hide on the flank and let it snap back, to judge its elasticity. He stepped back to have a good look at the hind legs and rumps; looked well at their sides to judge the depth of their bodies and straightness of the backs; he punched them in the ribs. (I would hate to take these liberties with our bulls at home.) Having paid all these attentions to the sides and rear of the animals, he came along the line in front, looking at their heads, forelegs, and briskets.

At a signal, the exhibitors led their bulls around the arena while the judge watched the animals in motion until he had

made his decision. Then he indicated which bull should be placed at the head of the line and which four among the others should take the next places according to their merit. The ribbons were awarded, blue, red, white, green, and yellow; and the judge stood beside each place-winner in turn to tell in what points the animal excelled and wherein it fell short of perfection.

We onlookers had made our own choice while waiting for the judge to make his. I was greatly elated upon finding that Professor Blizzard and I had picked out the same bull for first place. I did not admit that my choice was somewhat influenced by the fact that the bull belonged to Floyd Kimble, one of our near neighbors, and my conceit said, 'Why send all the way to Oklahoma for a judge — when I am right here?'

These bulls were then led out of the arena and we all clapped our hands in applause as the winners paraded past the bleachers.

The next class of bulls was brought in from the sheds and the same process was repeated; only this time the judge and I did not agree. The bull of my choice shared my chagrin when he was given fourth place, and he showed his feelings by trying to snatch the green ribbon from his owner's hand and eat it. My choice in the next class was given the yellow ribbon for fifth place. After all, it was just as well that they had sent to Oklahoma for a judge.

The animals were growing tired of so much human society. They wanted to be let alone; to wander off somewhere and lie down in the shade. There were more entries in the last class and they were younger animals, not so well used to a crowd. Some of them snuffed and puffed, tussling with their owners, lagging back or rushing forward. Two bulls at the lower end of the line rumbled threats at one another.

'Wait until we get out of this show,' bellowed one, 'and I'll give you a good licking!'

‘You — and who else?’ hooted the other.

Their owners tugged at the halter ropes, and nervous people looked at the one bar which separated the bulls and the spectators.

‘Those bulls are purty salty!’ commented a man seated back of me.

Carlos Ronstadt, of the Santa Margarita Rancho, was having trouble with his entry. The bull persisted in standing on three legs. When he was persuaded to put the fourth one down, he instantly picked up another. He bellowed to let the world know that he was tired of all this fuss and did not care how he looked.

Judge Blizzard completed his final rounds and paused, ready to announce his final decision for the day, his hand resting on the neck of the winner.

‘The reason why I chose this bull for first place,’ he began —

‘Blah-la-la-la-la-a-a-a!’ bellowed the blue-ribbon bull, speaking for all his fellows.

Then we all had a good laugh and started home to dinner.

We have an ancient relative who occasionally throws out vague hints that he may remember us in his will. There are so many ‘ifs’ and heirs that at best our legacy will be trifling, and if we get none at all, we shall have had our fun beforehand in planning what to buy with it. As we left the outlying part of Tucson behind us on the following morning and turned into the road that leads to Benson, Tombstone, and home, I began our old game of spending this legacy for all sorts of fine things I had seen in the shop-windows.

‘What shall you buy with your half of the money?’ I asked Charlie, when I could think of nothing more. We always begin by dividing our purely imaginary sum in two equal parts.

‘I’m just going to blow mine in,’ he answered.

I was all agog. Never have we had money with which to play ducks and drakes. I did not even know what was his idea of extravagance.

‘How will you blow it in?’ I asked, and eagerly awaited his reply.

‘I’m going to buy the best pure-bred bull I can get for the money — and turn him right out on the range!’



XXIX. A LADY BY REQUEST

THE State Veterinarian will be out here next Monday to test our cattle for tuberculosis,' announced Charlie Rak one night when he returned from Douglas. 'We must get up all the bulls and the cows we have in the beef pasture.'

Of course, the dairy herds have been tested for a long time, but the testing of range cattle is something new to Arizona. Although the stockmen are not obliged to have it done, we wish to show the other states that they are safe in importing our feeder cattle. So we are voluntarily submitting to the examination which may make ours a 'modified accredited area.' All of the bulls and a certain percentage of the cows in each herd must be tested.

Charlie, Ramón, and I spent the intervening days in scouring the range to find all of the bulls. Early on Monday morning we brought the cows from the pasture in which they were being held and drove them into the big corral. We did

not know at just what hour the veterinarian and his assistant would arrive, but he had many ranches to visit and we did not want to keep him waiting.

'I'm curious to know how the test is made,' said I, as we led our horses into the barn and unsaddled them.

'I'll tell you all about it afterward,' replied my husband.

'I can see for myself,' said I.

'I don't want you to come into the corral while the men are here,' was his surprising response.

'Why not? For Heaven's sake!'

'Because these men are not used to seeing women working cattle, and you had better stay in the house.'

'So that's it!' I cried wrathfully. 'Woman's place is in the home!'

I was about to add spice to that sentiment when I thought of the gaps between the pine poles which form the side walls of the barn. It was not worth while to make a fuss when I could see the whole performance merely by gluing my eye to a crack. I went back to the house and put on a dress, since I must play a feminine rôle. As I went about my work, I kept listening for an automobile, intending to run over to the barn as soon as the men began testing the cattle. At half-past ten, Charlie came over to the house.

'I don't see why they haven't come,' he said worriedly. 'They told me to get the cattle up early. You'd better cook enough dinner for them too.'

I was in the midst of my preparations for the noon meal when the veterinarian and his helper finally arrived. In the oven were a roast of beef and a pie; vegetables were bubbling in pots on top of the stove, and my hands were covered with biscuit dough. I couldn't leave the kitchen just then, no matter what was going on at the barn. I made coffee, filled pitchers with milk and cream, took the roast from the oven, and put in the biscuits. I made a big bowl of brown gravy.

Two extra leaves were put in the table because Charlie likes lots of elbow-room when he carves. Everything was ready to serve when I heard a car driving away and Charlie came over to the house alone.

'I asked them to stay to dinner,' he said apologetically. 'I told them you had it all ready for them, but they said they were in a big hurry and had no time to eat.'

'No fault of mine. I cooked it.'

We sat down at the table.

'You didn't miss much,' Charlie assured me as he began carving. 'Ramón and I ran the cattle through the chute and all the vet did was to inject the serum at the root of their tails.'

'And that's all there is to it?'

'No. They have to come back here in ten days to look at the animals again and see if there are any reactors.'

Before the ten days were up, Charlie had received a letter from Yuma which indicated that he might have a chance to sell our steers if he went down there in person and talked very persuasively.

'If you have to be in Yuma when the State Veterinarian comes back, who will handle the cattle while he makes the examination?' I asked nonchalantly.

'You and Ramón, of course,' replied my husband without batting an eye.

'These men are not used to seeing women working cattle,' I quoted with emphasis.

'Then they'd better get used to it,' he retorted, 'because I can't be in two places at once.'

'Neither can I. Who is going to get dinner for them if I am out in the corral?'

'You won't have to get dinner,' he assured me. 'The vet says he is going to come here the first thing in the morning,

MOUNTAIN CATTLE

and all you have to do is to see that the cattle are corralled and he isn't kept waiting.'

Ramón and I brought in the cattle very early. We put several blocks of salt in the corral so they might wait contentedly; after which I came back to the house to do my morning work. Ramón promised to keep a good lookout and whistle for me when he saw a car driving up to our gate. I swept, dusted, washed dishes, filled lamps, and emptied ashes; did everything except light a fire and cook.

When my husband goes away, leaving me alone in the house, I cease to think about food. As long as they last, I eat left-overs, standing by the pantry shelf while I do so. Thereafter, at best I fry eggs for my dinner; at worst I make cornbread for the dogs and eat a piece of it myself, washing it down with milk.

I thought the men might arrive at any moment, but it was eleven o'clock when Ramón whistled. I rushed out of the house, untying the gingham apron which I had worn over my riding-breeches and throwing it behind a tree as I ran. The cattle were lying down in the corral. When Ramón and I roused them, they entered the crowding corral without much urging and filed into the chute, where the veterinarian touched with fingers the place in which he had injected the serum ten days before. Had he found a lump at that spot, the animal would have been regarded as tubercular and condemned. All were smooth and now of proved health.

On their previous visit the men had driven away at once and were half a mile down the road before the last of the slow-moving cattle had ambled out of the corral. Now they seemed inclined to linger and talk.

'May we wash our hands?' asked the vet.

'Certainly, come over to the house,' I replied.

There I provided water, soap, and towels on the bench outside the kitchen door where men may splash as much as they like.

‘May we have a drink of water?’ asked the other man.
‘Of course. Come into the kitchen,’ I invited, fetching glasses from the cupboard and filling them from the faucet in the sink.

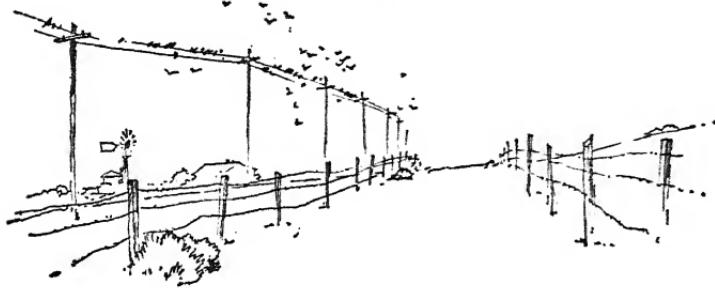
As they drank, they glanced around at a kitchen that was far too tidy to be promising. There was no cheerful litter of potato parings, spilled flour, or sticky bowls; no aroma of coffee or of onions frying in bacon fat. The big wood-burning stove was empty of pots and pans and stone cold.

They thanked me for the water — which was all they got — and drove away. It was too bad. They should have eaten the dinner I had cooked ten days before.

‘Woman’s place is in the barn,’ I remarked to myself.

Ramón had resaddled our horses and was waiting there for me to help him turn the cattle out on the range. I went over to join him, repeating the Scotchman’s grace:

‘Some have meat who cannot eat,
While some could eat who lack it.
We have meat and we can eat,
So let the Lord be thankit.’



XXX. TIO MAXIMO

THE west wind, dry and scorching, is rushing through the trees and the thrashing of their branches mocks us with its resemblance to the rushing of a river in flood. All through last winter my dreams were haunted by the enchanting vision of snow, scintillating under a deep blue sky; of mountains masked by ponderous masses of frozen snowdrifts; trees bowed beneath its weight; dogs ecstatically frolicking, scampering, rolling in the untrodden whiteness of the pasture.

Not once did I wake to find my dream come true.

For a time the hopes of spring rains still sustained us, but when these hopes were also unfulfilled, we knew that we were again in the merciless grip of the cowman's bitterest foe — drought. It was mid-April before we openly admitted that two months, possibly three, must be endured before we could look for that most precious free gift of Nature, the rain that gold cannot buy nor prayer hasten.

Drought is nothing new to us. Twice before we have matched our puny human force against it, trying to keep our

herd alive and our courage high. In some respects we are in a more favorable position to meet this third dry year than we were in the ones which preceded it. Last summer's feed was abundant and the cattle entered the winter in good condition. We have very few old cows and none that are toothless. Our young cattle are still able to ascend the slopes where the best feed remains. The sheltered canyons, to which they descend each day for water, afford shade and refuge from the wind. In March our yearling steers were gathered and driven down to the lower pasture on the Spear E range, where we had expected them to fill up on succulent weeds. In this dry year there were no weeds — no feed at all but sun-scorched, dusty, unpalatable grass, and the steers were in poor condition to sell well. They were shaggy, unattractive creatures, uneven in size, 'dogied.' Selling these yearlings must be our first move to combat the drought. Charlie left home at three o'clock one morning and traveled clear across Arizona in a day to see if he could dispose of them in Yuma Valley. The bargain that he made is good for the feeder, who is taking the steers sight unseen, and equally good for us, although no money changes hands now. All of our yearlings, large and small, are to be shipped to Yuma at once. We are not to receive pay for them until they have been fattened and resold as beef, and that may take a year. The main consideration is that we need not feed them ourselves.

It is now necessary for us to be riding constantly in order that we may find the mother cows who need supplemental feeding, and bring them home before they become weak and unable to give milk enough for their little calves. Every hour in the saddle is valuable, particularly in the morning when the cattle are grazing. Later in the day they hunt shade and are much harder to find in this wooded country. We have been hampered and annoyed by small, time-wasting jobs that delay us each morning, yet that must be done. Charlie and

Ramón cannot afford to clean out the springs with pick and shovel when they should be on a horse, or split stovewood while motherless calves may be bawling and starving in the hills.

José Nuñez now has steady work in Elfrida, and even if he were available, he would not be willing to serve us as the humble Jack-of-all-trades that we needed. José likes to sit up on a prancing horse, give orders, and play the *major-domo*. What we needed now was merely an extra pair of arms and legs. It developed that we had them without having been aware of it.

Last winter I went over to Ramón's house one day and found there an old man, neatly clad in faded blue overalls and jumper. He rose from his bench by the stove and offered me his seat with smiling courtesy. He was Maximo, Manuélá's old father, who had come to live with them. He was short, shriveled, crowned with a shock of coarse white hair. His eyes were the mild blue of the Maya Indian and peered out strangely from a brown, wrinkled face. For fifty of his seventy years he had worked in the mines, smelters, and fields of Arizona. Now he had reached a stage of apparent decrepitude when no one would employ him.

With much indignation his daughter later told me that her 'papa' had one overpowering weakness, a love of young, pretty women. After his wife's death he had married a girl of sixteen, who soon died. His mourning for her loss was abruptly ended by his marriage to another little señorita, who was more attracted by his wages and his neat adobe house than by his waning personal attractions. Upon this girl bride the doting Maximo had lavished his savings and when these were exhausted he allowed her to sell his furniture, bit by bit, in order to buy silk dresses and high-heeled slippers. Shortly after he had sold his house to gratify her love of finery, he had lost his job and could not find another. Whereupon the

young wife had fled to Mexico with a younger man, and Maximo had taken refuge in Manuélá's chimney-corner, to share the pot of *frijoles* that ever bubbles on the stove. For his *tortillas* and the tobacco that solaced his empty days he must now depend upon his son-in-law. His only respite from the nagging tongue of his daughter was when he fetched wood for the fire or drew water from the well.

'All day I tell him how foolish he was to marry a girl young enough to be his granddaughter,' grumbled Manuélá, 'but what good does it do? He'd marry again tomorrow if he could find another young girl who would have him!'

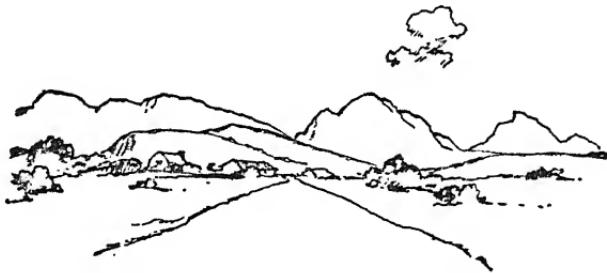
Once or twice he raked up my yard, taking away in a wheelbarrow the bones with which the dogs strew it. He even managed to rid me of the skull of a cow which Robles has found and dragged back to the front door so often that we called it 'Poor Yorick.' When Charlie now summoned him at Ramón's suggestion and told him to dig up several sections of rusty, leaking pipe, joy beamed from every wrinkle of Maximo's face. Through disuse his arms had become flabby, his legs wobbly. His strength could have been measured in terms of candle-power. Now there is the fire of pride in his eye and his back is straightening since he has ceased to spend melancholy days humped up beside the adobe wall. No one watches him or hurries him as he jog-trots about on his short, bowed legs, finishing one job only to begin another. He mends fences, cleans the stable, fetches in the milk cows, and occasionally milks them. Mounted on a gentle cowpony, *Tio* (Uncle) Maximo can even help with the cattle in an emergency. Every hour that he works is an hour saved for the rest of us.

Manuélá has now changed her constant grumbling from 'My poor papa has no work' to 'My poor papa is working too hard.'

Maximo the *viejito* — the little old one — cares little what

his daughter says now. He has learned to laugh and whistle again. Loudly and continuously he sings the praises of his *patrón*.

‘Oh! What a fine man is Señor Charlie Rak! He lets me work!’



XXXI. 'JUICIN' THE COW'

WITHIN a few days after his return from Yuma Valley, Charlie, Ramón, and Maximo rode off one morning at the crack of day, driving before them a few steers that had been missed when the main bunch had been taken to the Spear E range in March. Maximo was to be gone only two days; Ramón would be away longer, helping to gather our steers and drive them to the railroad shipping yards at San Bernardino. Charlie must remain with the cattle until they were inspected and loaded on board the cars.

Much of the usual work here at Rucker would have to go undone during the absence of the men. I had a tank full of water and Santiago could crank the engine for me when I needed to pump. The daily feeding of cattle I could manage, with Santiago to fill the great mangers with hay at night and in the morning before he went off with his burros. There was only one other task with which I needed assistance, and between Manuéla, Santiago, and Cota, a stray Mexican who was visiting him, I felt sure of the help I needed. Among the cattle that had just been driven away was the fat black and white heifer calf belonging to a Holstein milk cow named

Peggy. The calf was old enough to wean. It could be shipped to Yuma with the steers and we could still milk the cow and give the milk to the dogie calves.

Peggy Holstein came in early, bawling for her calf as usual, and when she did not answer, being many miles away by that time, the cow continued to bawl distressingly until I finally shut her up in the barn and threw a truss of hay in the manger to console her. When the cattle had been watered and fed and the other milk cows were united with their calves, I went over to Ramón's house to find Manuélá and ask her to milk Peggy for me. I have never yet known a Mexican country-woman who did not know how. The house was deserted except for Pochi, the little tailless cat, for whose convenience the screen door had been propped open. The tracks of an automobile hinted that Manuélá had gone off to town with some chance visitor, taking a vacation in the absence of her father and her husband.

As I went back to the barn, it occurred to me that one of the motherless calves which we were feeding might be very glad to milk Peggy for me. I was right about that. The calf ran to her eagerly, but Peggy butted and kicked him until he was glad to escape alive from the barn. Santiago and his friend were my last hope, and when they finally came home and unsaddled the burros, I went over to ask one of them to milk.

'I do not know how,' declared Santiago. 'Cota can milk for you.'

I looked inquiringly at Santiago's companion. He was a small, sleek, dapper Mexican with the little mustache of a dandy.

'I milked — once,' admitted Cota reluctantly.

That did not sound encouraging. Yet even so he was ahead of me because I had never milked at all. He followed me to the barn, where Peggy waited uneasily, distracted by the

strange absence of her calf and impatient because she had not been fed at the usual time. I put her cake and bran into the tub and she began to munch. There were the cow, the pail, and the milking-stool; the time, the place, and the four-legged girl. I looked around for the man. In the far corner of the stable stood the unhappy Cota, a small, shrinking figure, trying to hide himself behind the leather-loaded harness pegs. Timidly he came forward and accepted the milk pail which I thrust into his hand. He went so far as to place beside the cow the milking-stool which I handed to him also. Until I took my stand behind the cow, stick in hand, he would not consent to seat himself on the stool. Then he timidly grasped a teat in each hand and squeezed. Nothing happened.

'She is very hard to milk,' declared Cota, looking up at me apologetically.

'Ramón says she is very easy to milk,' I replied scornfully.

He squeezed again without result. Peggy looked around at him and swished her tail, and Cota jumped up in a panic.

'Thank you very much for coming over here.' I spoke with ironic courtesy. 'You may now go back where you came from.'

Gladly he scuttled out of the barn and Peggy and I eyed one another questioningly.

'Are you going to give me any more grain?' asked she.

'Are you going to give me any milk?' asked I.

Already she had devoured her evening meal with appalling speed. Ramón has always declared that she has within her a machine for grinding up grain. I knew that she would remain quiet only while she was eating, so I fetched an armful of hay and crowded it into her tub, sprinkling on top a few lumps of cottonseed cake for which she would have to search. Ramón, who has heard of sanitation, always washes his hands in the horse-trough and wipes them on his overalls before milking. The horse-trough was some distance away and I had no overalls.

I took Cota's place on the stool, determined to milk or bust. Many times in the past I have forced myself to acquire some art by refusing to let myself be outdone by some feather-brained person who had mastered it. I grasped a teat in each hand and squeezed.

Fifteen minutes later there was a cup of milk in the bucket, perhaps that much more on my shoes and stockings and the earth of the stable floor. My aim was erratic. Peggy had emptied her tub, but I was a long way from emptying her. To rest my hands, my neck, and cramped legs, I got up and fetched more hay and another handful of cake. I was improving. Once in a while a violent squeeze brought a fine stream of milk that 'zinged' into the pail in real professional style. More hay, more cake, more squeezes. My shoes were soaked in milk and the stable floor was muddied by it. There was not much milk in the pail, it is true, but at least it was all out of the cow. I plodded home wearily, strained the milk (it was full of hay, cow's hair, cottonseed cake, and germs) and drank it. I had earned it.

Tio Maximo was back in time to milk the next evening. Ramón rode in a few days later, leading Charlie's horse, and he bore a note from my husband, telling me to drive to Douglas the next afternoon, where he would meet me and come back by automobile.

The steers were shipped in the morning and Charlie rode into town with Inspector Billy Fourr and was waiting for me when I arrived in Douglas. Into the back seat of the sedan, helter-skelter, we threw the chaps, jumper, bridle, martingale, a *morrál* full of odds and ends, the canvas 'war-bag' which serves as a cowman's luggage. Last of all, Charlie flung his saddle across the hood of the car, lashed it to the hood-clamps with a riata, and we left the streets of the town for the long, lonely ranch road, the saddle-horn above the radiator pointing toward the high Chiricahuas and home.

A mile below our ranch we overtook an ancient truck. The motor was clanking and wheezing. Steam rose from the boiling, leaking radiator. The loosely bolted body shuddered and rattled, while the tires were so worn that each revolution seemed likely to be their last. Only by a miracle could such a dilapidated vehicle have reached the mountains, yet its occupants had the air of a picnic party. On the unsheltered front seat were a dark young man and a laughing, red-haired woman. In the bouncing, squeaking body of the truck were cooking-pots, provisions, and a bedroll upon which were seated an old man and two pretty little boys, who waved to us as we passed.

'I suppose they expect that wreck of a truck to hold together and haul them all back to town — and a load of wood besides,' commented Charlie.

He tumbled into bed as soon as we had finished eating supper.

'This is one night when I'm sure going to sleep!' he declared fervently. 'And I'm not going to get up until I get good and ready!'



XXXII. FEAR ENTERS THE FOREST

IT WAS half-past eight when we went to bed. At eleven o'clock our dogs roused me with their insistent barking. The deep rumble of Robles and the quick yelp of Negrito mingled in a warning and a challenge. For a moment I lay betwixt sleeping and waking, listening for the jittering yap of coyotes which sometimes sets the dogs to barking on moonlight nights. Instead, I heard a human cry, a faint 'Hello! Hello-O-O!' The dogs were barking by the distant gate where a man had prudently paused, fearing to come nearer to the house.

'Charlie! Wake up! A man is shouting!' I said, and finally managed to rouse him from deep slumber.

'Hello-O-O! Hello-O-O!'

Charlie jumped out of bed and ran to the open window, shouting, 'Hoo-hooooo!'

Faintly to our ears came the query, 'Can I come to the house?'

'No! Stay right where you are 'til I come!' warned Charlie.

He thrust his feet into slippers, and put on a bathrobe. Then the screen door slammed behind him and I heard his slippered feet slap-slapping from the graveled path toward the gate. Ramón had also been wakened and was on his way

to the house with the stranger. The dogs were friendly and quiet, now that they had roused us and were no longer responsible for the safety of the ranch.

As the men entered the house, I heard Charlie ask, 'How the devil did you do it?'

'I woke up — and saw something moving near the bed. I shot it with my rifle.'

'Get up quick, Mary!' shouted my husband. 'Here is a man who has shot his own child!'

The Forest Service telephone. The single wire that twists its tortuous way from tree to tree, that swings across rivers, droops low on hilltops, sways above deep ravines, and, sometimes, talks. There is no alert 'central,' only a little handle to twist, twist, twist, this call and that — short, long, two shorts — in the hope that a bell may tinkle in a ranch kitchen or on a Forest lookout tower. The fire-guard on Monte Vista answered our ringing finally. It was not sounding his own call, but he responded to the insistent ringing in the night which cried, 'Somewhere, something is wrong!'

Miles above us, on a pineclad peak, the guard heard Charlie's story and in his turn rang patiently until he roused the Ranger's wife, in a canyon far to the northeast of us. When the fire-guard relayed the message, for we could not hear her voice or she ours, she rang for the long-distance exchange, sixty-five miles away, and we were in touch with town. One sleep-dazed person rousing another was trying to undo the work of a man who had shot his rifle while half-asleep.

Humanity at the Douglas end of the wire at once fell into its two classes, the 'cannot' and the 'doers.' The policeman on night duty in town said, 'I don't think I can send anybody. Doctors are hard to get at night. Better bring the child in —'

'Call the Justice of the Peace!' I shouted from the bed-

room when I heard Charlie raging at official apathy. As soon as the second connection was made, back over mountains and canyons came the reassuring word from Judge Ash, 'Start from there with the child if you can move him. I'll meet you somewhere on the road with a doctor and nurse.'

I had been dressing and laying on the bed the clothing which Charlie would need; gathering a first-aid kit of cotton, gauze, and antiseptics. Ramón drew gas from the drum and filled the tank of the car while Charlie was dressing. We hurried madly. The father of the wounded child, silently waiting, unable to do anything to help us, appeared like a man in a dream, capable of nothing but endurance. Upon reaching here after his headlong flight through the forest on foot, he had resigned himself entirely to Charlie's guidance with his first words, 'I have shot my own child — and I don't know what to do.'

Ramón ran ahead to open the gates and Charlie paused for a word with him before descending from our mesa to the canyon road.

'Wait at the forks of the road with a light, Ramón, and send the doctor's car after us if we don't come back before it gets here.'

Then we wound down to the river, crawled across the rocky channel, and turned into the little-used road that leads up the canyon. In the open glades the moonlight paled the lights of the car. In the narrow, tree-shadowed windings of the road, we groped about the turns, fearing fallen branches and jagged rocks. The dazed, grief-stricken man who rode with us was the driver of the old truck which we had passed as we were coming home that afternoon. He had seen us turn to the right at the forks of the canyon road and had thus been able to find his way to us in the night. Shock and fear had so bewildered him by now that he was incapable of directing us to the place in which his family was camped. He could recall

no landmarks, no turn to left or right by which we might guide ourselves.

‘Did you cross the river above here?’

‘I don’t remember it.’

‘Did you pass a two-story adobe house?’

‘I think so — but I’m not sure.’

Whenever a dim, little-used roadway turned off into the forest, we looked for a track which could have been made by his truck that afternoon. About two miles up the canyon, fresh automobile tracks turned to the right and entered a rough wood road, which men have been using to haul free fuel from the forest. There the man threw back the wire Texas-gate and we plunged into a road which was little better than a cowpath. Because of its windings, our lights could show us the way only a few feet ahead, and the moon did not pierce the shadowing branches as we wound between trees, twisted around boulders, scraped under low-hanging limbs, and bounced over exposed roots and outcropping rocks.

‘I hope this is the right road,’ quavered our uncertain guide when we were hopelessly involved in a patch of woods in which it was impossible either to turn or back the car, and where we feared we might hang up on a high center at any moment.

Just then there floated through the dim woodland an eerie, haunting, harrowing cry.

‘Give a yell!’ commanded Charlie, and, when the man obeyed, a shout came back lustily through the trees. We drove on then with renewed heart, and, when our eyes caught the far-off flicker of a camp-fire, Charlie halted the car in a place in which we could turn about. Leaving the car with its nose pointed down the canyon, we headed for the camp-fire on foot, the father of the child having preceded us on the run.

The high, wailing lament unceasingly pierced the shadows and echoed above the cliffs. We feared that the child was al-

ready dead. In an open space, backed by a wall of rock and lighted by the brilliant moon, there glowed a camp-fire which cast its sanguine glow upon the father, now kneeling beside the quilts upon which lay the child. As I approached, the mother ran to me, gripped me in a frenzied embrace, screaming, 'I can't cry! I can't cry!' Again there rose from her lips the dolorous, haunting note of an Irishwoman, keening.

For a compassionate moment I held her and submitted to the clutch with which she strained me to her breast, then I loosened her hold gently, saying, 'You must let me go. I have the dressings and we have come to see what we can do for your child.'

At one side of the pallet of quilts which had been laid on the bare earth, there rose the bulk of a truck which was piled high with wood. A tall gaunt old man, the grandfather, stood silently beside the camp-fire, helping in the only way he could, by throwing fresh wood on the blaze to give us light. Charlie gently turned back the bed-covers and we saw the child, a beautiful boy of five, with a broad, noble brow and a peaceful expression that led us to hope he was not suffering. I knelt beside him, opened the box of dressings and gave the scissors to Charlie, who cut open the little rompers which were the child's only garment. In his right hip was a tiny, red wound, no longer bleeding. It was there that the bullet from a twenty-two-caliber rifle had entered. Charlie dressed the wound with skillful fingers.

'I won't hurt you, son,' he said as he lifted the boy and turned him over. We did not speak when we saw that the bullet had ranged upward and come out through another tiny hole in the abdomen; but Charlie's hands trembled now as he pressed the tape down over a gauze pad, and I knew he was aware of the hopelessness of his efforts. The child's father gasped once, but said not a word.

Sitting erect on the quilts beside his wounded brother was

a second child, a boy of three, who watched our every movement, claiming no attention for himself by word or whimper. At some distance from us, pacing beside the cliff, alternately in firelight and shadow, the mother wailed unceasingly, 'I can't live without my boy! Oh, God! Save my darling.'

Charlie wrapped the child in a quilt and put him in his father's arms. The grandfather picked up the other little one and they started back to our car. I snatched up a pillow for which Charlie called and turned toward the woman, who had momentarily stilled her screams to watch us.

'It is all my fault!' she wailed. 'I woke up in the night and something was moving near the bed. I woke up my man and pointed, and told him to shoot!' Her voice was rising to a shriek —

'Hush! Hush! You'll frighten the child!' I said. 'Now we are going to drive until we meet the doctor on the road. You can help us by being still.'

I coaxed her into silence until she was seated in the back of the car with the smaller child on her lap. Her husband sat beside her with the wounded boy on a pillow in his arms.

'Please be sure and put out the fire before you follow us,' I warned the grandfather.

'I'll put it out before I leave,' he promised, 'but I can't go 'til somebody comes for me. I don't know how to drive a car.'

We drove away, leaving the old man in his helplessness and anxiety. Over the hummocks, around the rocks and between the trees we crawled with more assurance because of having once been over the road. The boy complained a little of the jolting, and we were glad enough to reach the comparative smoothness of the canyon road where Charlie knew how to ease the car over rocks and chuck-holes. We stopped an instant at the forks where Ramón waited faithfully with a lantern, to tell him that he might now go home and to bed. There are many places in the canyon where two cars cannot pass, and

at these I looked ahead while Charlie watched the wheel-ruts, not knowing at what moment we might meet Judge Ash and the doctor. As we came out of the woods and into a broader road, we rounded each curve and surmounted each hill with the belief that we might see the lights of an approaching car. Now and again the tense silence was abruptly broken by the hysterical clamor of the mother. On the seat between his parents sat the three-year-old boy, erect, wakeful, and utterly still. Braced in the corner of the back seat, the father clasped his wounded boy and spared him the jolts of the swaying car. We heard him murmuring, 'Yes, dear, you shall have a drink of water. Soon we shall see the doctor.' Comforting, cherishing, his little son.

Beside me sat my weary, anxious husband, driving over that curving mountain road as he had never driven before; through the moonlit range country where cattle rose as we flashed past. We had climbed the long grade of the Leslie Canyon divide and were speeding down the other side when we caught the flash of powerful headlights on a curve far below. On a long straight stretch of road each driver winked his lights as a signal, although there was small likelihood of there being another car abroad that late at night. As we drew close and halted, the mother's wail rose, 'Ah-a-a! Doctor! Doctor!'

'I will do all the talking,' commanded Charlie, breaking the silence of an hour.

He left the car and closed the door. We heard nothing, saw only the gestures as he talked with Judge Ash and the doctor in the moonlit road. He got back into the car and started the motor.

'They want me to drive on to the hospital instead of transferring the boy to the other car,' he explained to the father. 'Everything is ready there and the doctor will follow behind us.'

I turned my head in response to a peremptory touch on my shoulder.

'Is that a good doctor?' demanded the mother.

'He is a very good doctor,' I answered. I dared say nothing else, although I did not even know his name.

Dim lights glowed faintly through the windows as we stopped before the door. Charlie strode inside, returning with an orderly, who reached into the car and lifted the child with tenderness and skill. The men followed him into the hospital. The second car drove up and Judge Ash, the doctor, and a nurse hastily mounted the steps and entered the broad doors. I was alone with the mother and the little child who sat beside her, wakeful, motionless.

'Where is the other doctor?' demanded the mother.

'There is only one,' I answered.

'Can one take out the bullet?'

'It is already out,' I said; 'did you not see the two wounds?'

'No! No! I didn't look! I was afraid to look at the poor darling after he was shot. Oh-o-o!'

'Hush, there are sick people asleep in the hospital. You mustn't wake them.'

She silenced her cry with her hand cupped over her mouth.

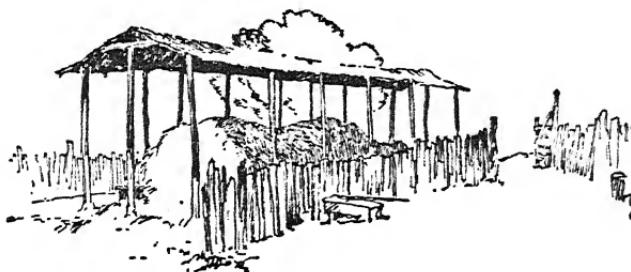
'Oh, why did I go out into the cruel mountains!' she sobbed. 'I'm so afraid of the dark, and the woods are full of bears and lions and wolves.'

The door of the hospital opened and in the glow of the light that streamed forth, I saw the father, head on his breast, walking toward us like a man in a dream.

'What does the doctor say? What does he say?' screamed his wife, jumping out of the car. He did not answer until he had reached her side and then I heard only her reply, which he tried to smother on his breast, 'Oh! I never thought he'd die!'

The Judge offered to drive them to their home. The

stricken father took in his arms the little child who bravely, patiently waited in our car, and he thanked us and bade us good-night, all in a half stupor more moving than tears. For a mile our car followed the Judge's automobile, then we turned toward the mountains and home. Upon us was still shining the great moon, which on its rising had seen a trusting little boy, asleep, snuggled beneath a quilt beside his mother.



XXXIII. HUNTING A PASTURE

OLD people are said to be fond of old saws of the Benjamin Franklin variety. That is not going to be true of me, for the older I grow the less I like them. Of some I am contemptuous because they have proved to be false. 'It never rains but it pours.' How often I have listened to the desultory patter of drops on the roof, waiting prayerfully and in vain for the life-giving downpour that our great need demands. Other adages enrage me by being all too true. All signs do fail in dry weather. Misfortunes never do come singly. A great trouble is host to parasitic little ones as surely as a dying oak tree is host to clusters of sap-sucking mistletoe.

In addition to the usual calamities that accompany a drought, quite sufficient in themselves, we must immediately face a serious situation with which we do not know how to cope. Several years ago our herd outgrew the capacity of our range, and there is no means of extending it. At first it was merely necessary to remove from our own ranch the steers, old cows, and others that we wished to sell, and keep these on rented pasture until they could be sold and shipped. Each year we kept the best of our heifer calves and soon

these were also pastured on the vast grassy range of our neighbors, the Krentzes. It was inevitable that there would come a time when they would need all of their range for their own herd, but we hoped by that time to be able to meet the situation by acquiring additional range elsewhere. One of the rock-pecking prospectors who prowl through the Chiricahuas continually might sink his pick into a rich ledge, and we should wake up to find ourselves in the midst of a gold rush. A more reasonable hope was that the price of cattle might go up and up until we could sell our excess animals for a goodly sum and buy land with the proceeds. Now, with no gold inside of the hills or grass on top of them, with cattle selling for less than they had brought for years, we must immediately find a place for our cattle that were on the Spear E range.

The drought had put a premium upon every drop of water and blade of grass in Arizona and every mouthful that our cattle ate was one mouthful less for the Krentz cows. When our cattle were driven back to our range, up the long, long trail through Tex Canyon, over the divide and into Rucker, we distributed them among the canyons and mesas where there was still a little feed, but they could not remain here. Feed was short for the cattle already here and no sane man would rent pasture while his own cattle starved.

‘I’ll have to get out and look for a pasture,’ sighed Charlie, ‘and I haven’t the least idea which way to go.’

It was hopeless to look for unoccupied range on the east side of the Chiricahuas, where lie the San Simón Valley and the Silver Creek country. For many years each piece of range that was sold by a small rancher or dry farmer has been added to the territory of one of his larger neighbors, until small holdings no longer exist there.

West of these mountains, in the Sulphur Springs Valley, this process of absorption has not gone quite so far. There is still land to be had, but it is the poorest in the valley as

a rule and is cut up into isolated tracts of small value to a cattleman, who must reckon his land in terms of sections and to whom one square mile of land is merely a horse pasture. Time after time Charlie drove away from home, determination in his eye, pursuing a rumor that someone, not too far away, had land to lease or sell. Night after night he came in long after dark to tell me why he could not get this piece of range or would not take that. Some places had already been sold before he got there, for we were by no means the only ranchers who were seeking extra pasturage. Sometimes he found that the water was inadequate; the fences broken or non-existent; the grass already grazed down to the roots. Much of the land in the Valley, once a cowman's paradise, had been plowed up by the homesteaders who settled on each quarter-section, and thistles or broomweed had replaced the native grasses which had been uprooted by the plow. Dazzling white alkali flats and hillsides sparsely clothed by stunted mesquite and greasewood were offered to us as grazing land, although they would not support two jack-rabbits to the quarter-section.

We were growing desperate when Charlie was told that Ralph Cowan, who has extensive interests in land and cattle in Cochise County, had been heard to say that he might be willing to sell a small, isolated ranch which was only a few miles this side of Douglas. By this time Charlie no longer attempted to do anything but search for a pasture, and when this rumor reached him he started off before daylight, anxious to see the owner before someone else secured the land. He came back three days later, looking so much more cheerful that I felt sure our troubles were over.

‘You got the place, didn’t you?’ I asked before he could get out of the car.

‘No. I didn’t. Ralph needs it for his own cattle — but he did give me some information and a good idea.’

'Ideas!' It sounded like a cuss-word the way I uttered it in my disappointment. 'Cows can't eat them!'

Except for the poorest of our cows which we were feeding, our cattle seemed to be keeping themselves alive upon nothing more substantial than salt, fresh air, and mountain scenery. After much patient explanation on my husband's part, it did not seem so impossible that there might be sustenance in an idea. At daylight the next morning we drove away from the ranch to see what could be done to make the idea practical, promising Ramón that we should be back in time to help with the feeding in the late afternoon. It was the second time in weeks that I had been beyond the boundaries of our own range, and, while I might see little by the roadside but the thin cattle of other ranchers, it was a relief to be away from our own for a few hours.

'Do you know where Moffit's Corner is?' Charlie asked as we drove down the canyon.

'Of course I do. That's the place in the Valley where we used to get stuck in the wash before they built the bridge.'

'That's where we're going,' he announced, and the thought of the mud in which we had more than once been stuck seemed encouraging. Possibly it would rain again there — if it ever rained anywhere again.

At our best speed we were now headed for a grassy stretch of range land that had changed during our own memory from a thickly populated district (according to Arizona estimates of a family to every one hundred and sixty acres) to a no-man's-land, bereft of houses, fences, and families. The very fact that the ownership of this land was divided among so many individuals was what we counted upon to make the present plan possible.

During the war, the two copper smelters of Douglas had employed a great number of men. Around the town and extending for miles up the Sulphur Springs Valley was land that

was subject to homestead entry, and many of the men who were employed in the smelters or in the town took up homesteads, built houses on them for their families, and commuted to and from their work by automobile. As a rule they did no more farming than they must in order to secure a patent to their land.

Possibly these 'nesters' dreamed that Douglas would grow to be a great industrial center and that each hundred-and-sixty-acre tract would some day be cut up into valuable building lots. Unfortunately for them, it did not turn out that way. There came the post-war slump in the price of copper, and the smelters closed down. Men moved away to look for work elsewhere and soon there were few families living on their land. Fences disappeared, the posts being hauled off by the poor people of the town who wanted them for fuel. Untenanted lumber houses were the next to be made into stovewood; finally the isolated adobe houses were gutted of their lumber floors and roofs, and their walls melted into the mass of mud from which they had been made.

At the edges of this once-populated land there still remained a few small stock-ranchers, and dairymen who supplied the town with milk. The cattle of some of these men were now turned out to graze upon what they had come to regard as open range. No one had attempted to lease this land or buy it, for the difficulties of dealing with so many scattered owners seemed too great an obstacle. To reunite these quarter-sections of land into pastures large enough to pay for fencing was the only way that we could see to secure a place for our cattle. On the previous days Charlie had secured the names and addresses of the owners of some of this land and had plotted their holdings on a map. A few owners still lived in this vicinity and these he intended to visit at once. Others were scattered among the forty-eight states and some were in South America.

After driving up and down the dirt roads that ran through this unfenced land, I was more than committed to the plan. I was enthused. Our resources were limited, and one thing which recommended this project to us was the chance that we could get this land either by lease or purchase for a sum within our means. Besides, it was 'Hobson's choice.' On his earlier trips to the Valley, Charlie had exhausted every other possibility.

To make an immediate test of the project, we called upon a landowner who still lived in Douglas, and he showed an encouraging willingness to lease his land to us for a period of years. He said it was being grazed, anyway, by stray cattle, so he might as well be paid for the grass on the land. His sister owned the adjoining quarter-section and he offered to write to her himself, advising her to rent the land to us. Naturally we dared not expect all of our negotiations to go so smoothly, but we felt that we were off to a good start.

From Douglas we drove back to look over the country a second time. Leaving the road, we drove slowly across the level grass land. The sod was good. Because the homesteaders had not really been farmers, they had plowed up very little of the native grass, which was chiefly of a coarse, bumpy variety called galleta. Although it had been overgrazed, a few good seasons would bring it back luxuriantly. Down by the deep creek, where many cattle were watering at the pools, there were sections of mesquite browse, and in good years there would be an abundance of mesquite beans, which are excellent feed for cattle. Frequently we came across a deep, caved-in hole that had once been a dug well; or the iron casing of a drilled well, filled up with rocks by mischievous boys who could no longer find windows to break. Now and then we crossed loose strands of barbed wire, lying stretched along the line where a fence had once stood. The posts had long before been burned for stovewood.

All the way home we discussed ways and means; how we should divide among our force the work that faced us. It was agreed that I should take charge of the work at the Home Ranch, helped by Ramón and Tio Maximo. As soon as Charlie secured enough land to make even a small pasture, he was to take Santiago to the Valley and give him a contract to work on the fence. All of Charlie's time must now be devoted to this new venture, except for the trips to Rucker with cottonseed cake for the cattle. Even then he could haul a load of posts back to the Valley.

My husband proposed to concoct a form letter, addressed to each absentee owner, asking him for a lease on his property. These letters I could be typing in what was ironically called my leisure time. As soon as we began building fences, the owners of the cattle now grazing on the land would be sure to try to block our every move, and some might try to get the leases which we needed. We must act quickly while our intention was still unsuspected.

'We shall find one old friend waiting for us down in the Valley,' concluded Charlie, as we were crossing the river just before reaching home.

'Who is it?' I asked.

'It is Whitewater, this same old river of ours. It flows underground for miles and miles and comes out on the surface in that creek you saw today. It will still water our cattle there.'



XXXIV. WHAT AILS THE COWS?

OUR Sunday observances are of necessity very simple these days, yet they do distinguish that day from the rest of the week. We make it a day of rest to the slight extent of remaining in bed an extra hour. We have a special breakfast and eat it in a more leisurely fashion. Ramón does not go out into the big pasture on foot at day-break to wrangle horses, knowing that they will come in by themselves during the forenoon in search of water and grain. While I give the house an extra lick and dust the seats of the chairs in the living-room — my only preparation for possible Sunday callers — Charlie tinkers with his truck, writes up his diary, looks over the faithful engine at the well which pumps water for us and for the cattle.

This engine is not a soulless piece of mechanism. It is a friend named 'Bang-chook,' tenderly wrapped in an oiled tarp when not working. It is of an ancient model called the Jack-of-All-Trades, of one-and-a-half horse-power. I used to wonder which end of the horse was the half until 'she' kicked

me unmercifully one day when I cranked 'her.' When every nut has been tightened, every part has been oiled, and the tank is full of gasoline, Charlie attaches the battery and turns the heavy fly-wheel with the crank.

'Bang! Bang! Chooka-chooka-chooka-BANG!' sings the Bang-chook.

The cows that have been licking salt blocks under the shade of a spready oak always accept that familiar sound as an invitation to go to the troughs into which fresh, cool water is now flowing from the depths of the well. When Robles was a puppy, he thought it was an invitation to go for a ride, and he snuggled as close to the clamoring engine as possible, hopefully waiting for it to roll merrily away and take him along. Now, disillusioned, he lies at a distance and watches it, scorning a creature which has both wheels and a motor, yet is content to spend its whole life in one spot.

After the unavoidable morning chores are done, Ramón and Maximo come over to our house to get their week's supplies from the storeroom. If I would allow her to do so, Manuélá would dash over here before each meal to get a can of tomatoes, a pound of coffee, or a box of matches, as Mexican women do when they live in town.

Santiago does not go out with his burros on Sunday. Their bells tinkle faintly from the glade where they are grazing, wanting to come in for their ration of corn, fearful that if they come they may be captured and put to work. Santiago washes his clothes, cooks extra food, and spreads on the fence his dingy comforters and blankets for their weekly airing in the hot sun. Then he comes to the house also for his flour, beans, salt-pork, and tobacco.

Always on Sunday the men are dressed in clean blue shirts and overalls. One Sunday there was a still more noticeable improvement in their appearance. They were freshly shorn.

'Where did you get the hair-cut?' I demanded enviously.

On our hurried visits to town I had no chance to visit the barber. My straight, stringy locks straggled about my neck and cheeks. If they curled, I should have looked like Medusa.

‘Maximo cut our hair. He is very good at it,’ replied Ramón.

‘Will you cut mine?’ I asked Tio Maximo.

They thought, of course, that I was joking and laughed politely.

‘I mean it!’

‘I’ll cut it if the Señora wishes,’ replied Tio Maximo, giggling with embarrassment.

Charlie was lying on his back beneath the truck, twisting the handle of a grease-gun. It seemed better not to disturb him, since he appeared not to notice the procession which was headed for the Mexican quarters on the other side of the creek. Santiago, who has the height of a drum-major, and a bushy head, carried high, marched in the lead with a sack of flour on his shoulder. Ramón, whistling a cheerful tune, followed with the wheelbarrow, which squealed an accompaniment with every revolution of its ungreased wheel. Maximo came next, with a sackful of odds and ends of groceries on his back. I marched behind them, followed closely by Negrito and Robles. All in Indian file and all Indians but me.

More Indians awaited us at Ramón’s house. Squatting on the ground by the adobe wall were three men from the wood-camp, who had also come to ask Maximo to cut their hair. In a real barber shop I must await my turn, but these customers willingly let me be the first. Manuéla, after raising her hands in horror, brought forth a backless kitchen chair so I might sit outside in the sunshine where the light was better. She pinned a clean kitchen apron around my neck. Maximo took a stand behind me with shears in hand,

shaking so with laughter that he was afraid to use them. Finally he gave the first snip, and when the shears flashed in the sun at the back of my neck, Negrito drew near, growled, and took up his stand by me, ready to defend me if necessary, while Robles sat on the ground facing us, his eyes fixed upon Tio Maximo. It would have been a sad day for Tio if his shears had nipped a bit from my ear.

I rose from the chair, unpinned the apron, and ran my hand over my shorn head. I had no idea how I looked, but I felt cooler and my locks were now strewn on the ground instead of tickling the back of my neck. I presented my thanks to Tio Maximo together with a can of tobacco (we call it my Prince Albert hair-cut), and hastened home to look in the mirror. From my neck up I was shorn in Mexican fashion. Halfway up my head there jutted forth a shock of hair that covered the top like a thatch. Had I been tall, slender, and willowy, I should have looked like a coconut palm.

‘It’ll grow again, thank God!’ yelped my husband.

In the afternoon Ramón saddled up Mousie and went out to the pasture to fetch in the cattle to be watered and fed. I took my usual place by the troughs and watered the thirsty animals as they filed in. Ramón rode in late, driving before him the stragglers that he had found hidden in the brushy corners of the pasture. He looked very worried.

‘There is a cow down,’ he said, ‘one of those that I found on Soldier Mesa and brought home yesterday. She does not look as thin as several others that we have here, yet she cannot get up — not even when I tried to help her.’

Charlie saddled his horse and rode back with Ramón. An hour later they returned, following rather than driving the cow. She drank at the trough, ate the cake that was put in a tub, then lay down in a small corral in which she was alone with her calf. Her attitude was stiff and unnatural; her head

was twisted way around to one side; her hide was stiff and leathery, and shivers seized her from time to time in spite of the sweltering heat. On Monday morning she was dead.

'She should have been brought in and fed sooner,' said Charlie, 'but she looked all right and she didn't walk like a weak cow.'

One of the ways in which we judge the strength of an animal is to watch her hind legs. If she sways upon them, planting her feet carefully, we know she is weak and fearful of falling. Usually, when we have brought home a thin cow that is able to make the trip on her own feet, and when she shows a healthy appetite for the grain that is set before her, we feel that she is as good as saved, needing only hay and grain upon which to grow strong. Judging by our experience, this cow should not have died.

The very next day Charlie found a dead cow on the range. She was lying at the foot of a trail upon which she had stumbled and fallen. He knew her well and had seen her only three days earlier, when she had been climbing the hills with apparent ease. Near the cow was her young calf, its voice weak from frantic bawling, its nose caked from fever and thirst. He roped it and placed it across the seat of his saddle, head and forelegs dangling limply on one side of the patient horse, tail and hindlegs dangling on the other. Then he mounted and rode home with the starved, spiritless calf across his knees. We fed it first from a bottle, and later found a cow with a good udder to which we gave the calf as a foster-son, rewarding her with double rations of cake and bran.

'There was another cow that had no business to die!' worried Charlie.

He felt more cheerful when he came to the house after dark to eat a belated supper.

'Mrs. Finnie's calf has just been born, a fine heifer,' he

announced. 'Now we'll have plenty of milk, enough to drown all the dogies in the coral.'

Now that Mrs. Trouble is nineteen years old and has become an emancipated globe-trotter, Mrs. Finnie is our mainstay. She is a tremendous, pure-bred Holstein that Charlie bought from a dairyman when she was two days old. Mrs. Trouble raised her, and together with her rich milk, or by her bad example, lent to the calf some of her own characteristics. Like her foster-mother, Mrs. Finnie breaks fences, opens gates, fights other cattle — and looks at us afterward with an eye that says, 'I deserve a good whack with a stick, but I know you won't give it to me.'

Finnie gives such a tremendous amount of milk that a day-old calf could not possibly take a fourth of it. On that account Ramón looked for her early the next morning, intending to drive her in from the little pasture where her calf had been born and milk her. The milk would not be good for human consumption for several days, but he could pour it into bottles and give it to the youngest dogie calves. When Ramón approached the little grove in which Finnie was lying, she looked at him stolidly and refused to budge. He prodded her gently; joked with her about her laziness, jerking her tail as though he meant to lift her. When she finally made an effort to rise and sank back among the leaves with a sad grunt, he realized that poor Mrs. Finnie simply could not get up.

Ramón called us and we left our breakfast unfinished to rush over and see her. She would willingly eat when food was put right under her nose. She drank all the water in a bucket fetched from the well. Tio Maximo had joined us by this time and possibly four of us could get her up. Horses get up front end first. Cows stand first on their hindlegs, then straighten the front ones upon which they have been kneeling as they rise. First of all we saw to it that all four

of Mrs. Finnie's legs were in exactly the right position for getting up cow-fashion. Then we prepared to lift her in the method which Ramón says he learned in Mexico when he was a boy. He fetched a new two-by-six plank, which we managed to slide beneath the cow, just back of her forelegs. One end of this plank was then lifted about a foot until it rested on a broad flat rock.

'Now! All together!'

Charlie lifted by the tail and Ramón by the head. Tio Maximo and I jointly heaved on the plank lever with the rock for fulcrum. Finnie did all she could to help herself. When all five of us were exhausted, Finnie still lay grunting on the ground, a thousand pounds of bovine discouragement. After panting and wiping our brows, we turned the cow a little and looked at her udder, in which there was little milk where there should have been gallons. Charlie caught her calf, which had been bawling nearby, and put one of the teats in its mouth, whereupon it fell to sucking lustily.

'Something is very wrong!' declared my husband as we walked back to our own breakfast. 'Those range cows could have got down because they were poor. Finnie is fat and she has had enough to eat all her life. I'm going to town and bring out the veterinarian.'

After he had gone on this mission, I looked speculatively toward the shelf on which stands a thick book entitled 'Diseases of Cattle,' but I knew better than to take it down and open it. I can read a patent-medicine 'Almanac' all through from January to December without finding any symptoms in myself, but after reading a few pages in that book I imagine that our whole herd will shortly be decimated by actinomycosis, mycotic stomatitis, and a host of other bovine ailments that must surely be fatal to cattle if they are half as bad as they sound.

Charlie had difficulty in finding the veterinarian and it

was dark when they arrived. With a lantern and flashlights we went at once to see Mrs. Finnie, whom I had visited many times during the day. The veterinarian took her temperature, examined her as well as he could by the dim light, and made the conservative statement that there were a number of different things that could be the matter with her, in view of the fact that she had given birth to her calf only the day before. He gave her a hypodermic injection of some sort of medicine; literally and figuratively a shot in the dark. Finnie shivered, as the other sick cows had done before her. I brought two big old comforters, 'soogans' in cowboy parlance, and these we put over her, tucking them carefully about her legs. Then we went back to the house, fearing that Finnie might be dead in the morning.

It was not merely the material loss of her milk, cream, and butter of which we were thinking. We were fond of her. A cow that spends her whole life out on the range is to us just one among hundreds, differentiated from her sisters by her markings if at all, valued only as property. The cows that are around the Home Ranch, because they give us milk or we give them grain, immediately take on a personality in proportion to their brains, and even small calves differ markedly in their mentality. To these cattle which we know individually, names are given, Spanish ones usually because our Mexican helpers rename them otherwise. Finnie is La Feenee to Ramón. The only trouble is that when these cows or bulls become old and have to be sold, it is like selling one's own kin 'down de ribber.' That is a fate which we agreed should never befall either Finnie or Mrs. Trouble.

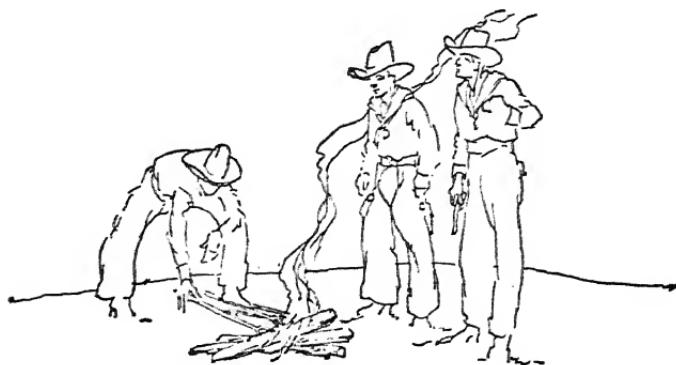
We had a pleasant surprise in the morning. Mrs. Finnie had succeeded in getting up unaided at some time during the night and was at the barn, bawling for her grain, at daybreak. Perhaps it was the effect of the hypodermic injection. Perhaps she did not like the pattern of the patchwork quilts

and crawled out from under them. Together with this good news came the report that another one of our thin cows was down in a heap, shivering and groaning. If it had to happen at all, it was fortunate that she collapsed while the veterinarian was still here.

After breakfast we went over to the corral with him and he knelt beside the sick cow to make his examination: temperature, respiration, the color of her eyeballs. She would not stick out her tongue, but Charlie pried open her mouth and made her show it. Bottles were produced from the veterinarian's black bag, and he took a sample of the cow's blood. He took a tick from her ear and another from her udder, and dropped each of them into a separate bottle filled with cotton and carefully labeled them. Next he demanded a different variety of tick that is supposed to be on horses. Luckily our horses rarely have ticks, but I searched *Æohippus* from bow to stern, while he complacently munched grain, and finally located a tick at the root of his tail. It proved to be a tickess and I was sent back to find her mate, who was hiding in *Æo*'s thick mane. Together these ticks were also placed in a bottle in which they were to take a one-way trip to the laboratories in Washington, D.C., by airplane. The veterinarian concluded by giving the cow the same sort of hypo that he had given Finnie, but it was too late to save her and she died before noon.

With his specimens all labeled and packed for dispatch to the laboratories, he drove away without having made a specific diagnosis. He is a cautious man, not given to snap judgments.

‘Scientific as hell!’ said Charlie when we were alone. ‘But what ails the cows?’



XXXV. THE CREEPS

WE HEARD from the veterinarian in the course of time and he confirmed the diagnosis that accident had already enabled us to make for ourselves. We take several publications that are devoted to stock-raising, and a few days after Finnie's illness we came across an article in the *Western Livestock Journal* in which the symptoms of her ailment were exactly described. Fearfully I looked up Osteomalacia in the big book on the shelf. It is a deficiency disease, commonly called 'the creeps,' due to a lack of lime salts in the feed. A cow that has just had a calf, or is soon to have one, depletes her own system and her bones become brittle and soft, particularly the bones in her hindlegs and spine, which she uses in getting up from the ground. In our part of the country the cattle had rarely suffered from it, and it was now due to the series of dry years during which the grass had been scant and lacking in minerals.

Immediately we sent off for the calcium phosphate which Charlie intended to mix with loose salt and put out on the range in troughs, where the cattle could eat all they wanted of it. This would prevent the trouble. The veterinarian sent us a supply of calcium gluconate to be used in injections for cows already afflicted. Troughs by the dozens were needed immediately. We had been in the habit of placing fifty-pound blocks of salt on the ground on many parts of the range, and in each of these places we must now put the calcium so that the cattle could find it at their accustomed salt-licks. Charlie sawed up a heavy plank and made one trough. Nails would never do, because the salt and calcium would rust them and the boards had to be put together with wooden dowels. Out in front of the old Fort stood a hollowed log in which salt had been fed long before we came here. Down by the river were innumerable big sycamore trees. We found a husky young wood-chopper who felled the trees and sawed them into suitable lengths. Tio Maximo did the skilled work of hollowing them out with an adze. Our burros were fetched in from the range and on their backs the troughs were taken to places far off in the mountains where no vehicle can go. When the precious and highly expensive mineral arrived, we mixed it in the proportion of three of calcium phosphate to seven of loose salt and filled the troughs. The cattle consumed it so voraciously that the indignant burros were kept busy packing fresh supplies to the range.

Among the calves we found only one case of creeps. His mother had by no means depleted her own system. Instead she had depleted her calf, while she was strong and fat. At birth he was little more than a collection of inarticulated bones, held together by a hide. Limber Jim, soon shortened to Jimber, could not stand, much less walk. I carried him over my arm, dangling like a fox-fur. I had to hold him up

to the cow while he sucked, and since his mother's milk was rich and plentiful, he seemed to be a little heavier each day. I had heard of a man who planned to lift a baby elephant regularly every day so that he might win fame by lifting it when it was grown to full size. I do not know how he came out with this ingenious scheme, but I could not see myself lifting Jimber when he became a yearling. To make things a little easier, I padded a wheelbarrow with hay and trundled him about in it, going out every now and then to move him so that he might be in the shade. I did not grieve when I went out one morning and found that he no longer took the trouble to breathe.

Several of the little calves developed the scours (diarrhea), and the big book advised giving them raw eggs, beaten up in cold coffee. Charlie Rak was skeptical until our neighbor, Miss Meadows, told us that this was an old Texas remedy. We found that it worked equally well in Arizona.

No new cases of creeps developed after the cows began eating calcium, and we devoted our energies to feeding cattle and getting a pasture ready for those which we could move to the Valley in the summer. We were fortunate in that we still had some hay; not all we wanted, perhaps not all we needed, still it was much better than having to cut mescal heads and roast them in a pit and grind them up for roughage, as we were obliged to do in a previous dry year. We were as economical as possible with the hay, short of emulating the farmer who just got his cow to where she could live on one straw a day — and then she up and died.

One method of eking out our supply of hay was discovered by the cows themselves. Down in the ravine that runs through the Home Pasture there is an old well which we have never needed to use. In the course of time the logs which covered it had rotted and fallen in. New ones were needed to keep some unwary animal from plunging in and drowning

Tio Maximo went down with his axe to fell two or three straight black-jack oaks for covering the well, and when the trees crashed, a few gentle cows ventured near to eat the leaves from the branches now lying on the ground. By noon the cattle had stripped the limbs of every bit of green; their sides bulged and they were lying in the shade, chewing their cud, at the hour when they were usually at the gate of the pasture, lank and hungry, waiting to be fed.

Oak trees are plentiful enough. We can burn the wood in the winter or sell it, and the grass in the pasture will grow all the better if the trees are thinned out. Tio Maximo was soon going off each morning, axe over his shoulder, tin bucket of drinking-water in his hand. When the cows heard the ring of his axe, they came a-running. He cut only enough to last for the day because the leaves wither so quickly in the dry heat. More and more cows took Maximo's axe for a dinner-gong and each day he was obliged to fell more trees.

'I can't cut the trunks and branches into cordwood until the cows stop eating and lie down,' he told me once when I found him resting in the shade. 'They crowd around me so closely that I'm afraid I might cut off their tails.'

Finnie grew strong, and her milk began to flow in its customary abundance. We kept very little of it for ourselves. Her own calf thrived on one teat and the rest of her milk was poured into bottles while still warm. Ramón and I made the rounds of the dogie calves night and morning, pouring it down their necks. We had one-bottle babies which were already getting some milk from their own poor mothers; two-bottle babies, and so on up to the voracious five-bottle baby, Cinco Botellas, who butted us to demand a sixth helping.

Mrs. Finnie was so grateful for her renewed health that she did me a great favor. She broke down the gate to the vegetable garden one night when all was still and demolished

it completely. My relief was immense. I never have liked gardening. I have grudgingly yielded to the tradition that a ranchwoman must dig and delve among the radishes. To me one calf is more than a field of cabbages. Because of the late spring at our altitude, we cannot safely plant a vegetable garden before the second week in May; while in mid-October we may expect to find the plants black from the first touch of frost. Between these dates I have annually struggled with squash-bugs, gophers, birds, weeds, and drought for the meager reward of a row of string beans, carrots (which we do not like), tough beets, and squashes. Now, as long as Finnie lives, I shall say that it is of no use to plant a garden for her to destroy.

‘A long, long life to you, Mrs. Finnie!’



XXXVI. THE WOLF TRACK

WHENEVER Ramón has been out riding on the range by himself, he comes over to the house as soon as he has unsaddled his horse, eager to tell me in great detail all that he has seen or done. By the time he has walked halfway from the barn to the house, I know whether he is the bearer of good tidings or ill. If Ramón brings good news, his shrill, tuneless whistle precedes him and I am assured that he has encountered no dead calves, dry water-holes, lame horses, or cows with the pinkeye. If my first notice of his approach is the slow clump-scrunch, clump-scrunch, of his high-heeled boots on the gravel of the terrace, then I prepare myself to hear some tale of disaster.

'Will you come over to the barn with me, please, Señora,' he gloomily requested when he appeared in our doorway one morning after only an hour's absence. 'There is something I want to show you.'

An Indian can be exceedingly glum without half-trying. Ramón's beady black eyes were expressionless; his angular chin set like a rock. On his mouth there was not even a pucker of the lips where a whistle had once been. Without a

word I started over to the barn, feeling positive that I was not going to like what I found there.

In the corral stood a drooping, dejected, three-year-old heifer, who looked up at me with sick, bewildered eyes. I walked around behind her and gasped with astonishment and pity. At the root of her tail and on her rump were long gashes, torn in her flesh by the fangs of a wolf that had tried to pull her down to the ground and kill her. Unlike most of our cattle, she had not been dehorned, and it was quite possible that her life had been saved because she still had horns to use for self-defense.

‘Great grief!’ I sighed. ‘A lobo on the range to add to all our other troubles!’

I continued to mourn as I helped Ramón drive the poor creature into the chute where her wounds could be doctored and covered with pine-tar to keep off the blow-flies. We could tell by the condition of the wound that she had been attacked only the night before and Ramón had found her only half a mile from home. A wolf within a mile may be no worse than one five miles off, but it is uncomfortably near our door. There seemed to be an excellent chance of saving the life of the heifer, although we should have to doctor her for weeks, and during her long convalescence she would consume more hay and cake than she was worth. Later in the day her calf was prematurely born and died within an hour, chalking up another score against the lobo.

For all my love of dogs, starting with the noble Saint Bernards and ending with shivering, hairless Chihuahua terriers, I am still unable to encounter the friendliest of German police dogs without a shudder. They are far too much like the fierce gray lobo of the Southwest. Huge, ravenous wolves, singly, in pairs, and in packs, preyed upon our cattle in earlier years until the combined efforts of the United States Biological Survey and the State succeeded in so re-

ducing their numbers that one was rarely known on an Arizona range. Down on the International Line the Government hunters maintained their own border patrol to halt the alien wolves that are forever trying to slip into this country from the nearby mountains of Old Mexico. The trouble was that these hunters were too efficient and presently found that they had worked themselves out of a job.

'Why should we pay hunters when there are no longer any wolves left in Arizona?' argued some of the town-dwelling members of the State Legislature, and they failed to make an appropriation for that purpose. The Federal appropriation for Arizona was withdrawn as soon as the State refused to match it, and the hunters were dropped from the payroll. Unmolested, mother wolves now raised their pups in Arizona caves. Gray shapes flitted across the Mexican Border at night to sample Arizona beef; lions stole through the mountains, stalking deer and colts; coyotes yammered and tittered on the foothills, while everywhere resounded the bawling of cows, mourning their lost calves.

'Who said we don't need hunters?' clamored the roused stockmen, and Governor Moeur searched his official pockets until he found money which he could use to put the hunters back on the payroll. Among those who returned to duty was 'Brother' Eddie Anderson, a transplanted Yankee, who devotes his traditional Connecticut ingenuity to outwitting wolves.

To him I wrote as soon as I returned to the house after seeing the poor heifer, and Ramón rode down the canyon to give the letter to a neighbor who was going to town the following day. I was not at all confident that Mr. Anderson would take the message seriously when he saw that it came from a woman. Men of the Southwest seem to have decided ideas with regard to 'woman's sphere.' With a few noteworthy exceptions, even those men who know that I help my

husband with our cattle are still reluctant to talk with me 'about a cow.' In the light of this experience I foresaw that Mr. Anderson might not condescend to talk with me about a wolf. He might even be unwilling to believe, on my unsupported say-so, that there was a wolf on our range — if not in my sphere.

To be prepared to meet his doubts, Ramón and I rode out in the afternoon to make a wide search of the range. We looked, and sniffed the air, for earlier victims of the wolf, and rejoiced when we found none. We scanned the trails, the salt grounds, and the watering-places for wolf tracks, finding no sign. This puzzled us until we came upon one clear print of a huge forepaw, with pointed pads and two elongated middle toes. The print had been freshly made by a lobo that had merely crossed a cowpath instead of following it.

Around this one precious, distinct track of the lobo, Ramón and I built a miniature log cabin with walls and roof of small sticks, so that no animal could efface the print, nor wind blur its sharp outline. This track was Exhibit A, to uphold our case against the world. Exhibit B was the torn flesh of the unfortunate heifer, which gave mute evidence as to the width of the wolf's jaws and the length of his fangs. We had now done everything that we could and waited impatiently for word from the hunter.

The very first Government hunter that we ever summoned to help us, many years ago, traveled in primitive style, as beffitted those times. He had covered the distance between the Rincons and the Chiricahuas, seated on the high spring seat of a high-wheeled, creaking farm wagon. On the uncomfortable backless wooden seat perched his wife, unsheltered from sun or rain. In the back of the wagon was their meager outfit, helter-skelter: bedroll, grain for the horses, traps, bait, cooking-pots, provisions, frames for stretching hides.

The hunter who came to help us a few years later, bounced along merrily in a *truckicito*, a little delivery truck, with his traps and Dutch ovens rattling together companionably in the box at the back of the car. A lion-hunter came in a battered, sputtering, boiling touring car, the mournful faces of his hounds thrust through the tattered curtains. Their eerie baying warned us — and the lions — of their approach.

On his previous visits to our range, Mr. Anderson had fetched his camping outfit, traps and guns, in a capacious trailer that bobbed along on two wheels behind his automobile. This time he drove up to our door in a neat roadster, and when I noted the absence of the trailer, I feared that he did not plan to stay.

He uncoiled his lean, putted legs and crept out from the low-swung roadster to mount the steps of the terrace, his khaki riding-breeches and shirt as immaculate and creased as those of any army officer. Before the door he paused and wiped his high forehead, looking around appreciatively at the juniper trees and vines that surround the house.

'My! It's fine up here in the woods — even in a drought!' he exclaimed. 'I've been camped down on the border where there isn't a tree in miles.' His blue eyes gleamed as they rested on the wooded mountains.

Another car now appeared at the gate and, when it was driven into the yard by Mr. Anderson's helper, my anxieties were over. It was a housecar, a veritable perambulating mansion. Soon the proud owner was showing me all its devices and gadgets, bed, table, cupboards, and clothes closets. There was a sink, and a water-tank to supply it; a gasoline stove for cooking and a wood-stove for heating; radio, electric lights, bookshelves and desk. It was Bachelor's Hall on wheels. Mr. Anderson is so tall that there was little room between his blond head and the ceiling. To compensate for this disadvantage, he is also extremely thin and takes up

little room sidewise. On a shelf in the cupboard were glass jars of fruit that he had put up himself. No spinster could have lived more tidily, and everything was in apple-pie order from the curtains at the windows to the little rug just inside the door. Mr. Anderson frequently moves at a day's notice and in this rolling home he is as snug as a turtle in its shell and able to travel far faster. In half an hour he was settled pleasantly by a pool in the river, shaded by a spreading juniper tree that has sheltered him before.

He looked at our heifer and nodded his head with satisfaction, enthusiastically agreeing that only a large lobo could have bitten her in that manner. Almost he congratulated us upon having a ravenous wolf on our range, and, while I did not consider this a matter for congratulation, I recognized his professional attitude, something like that of a skillful surgeon who is pleased with a serious case that is worthy of his best efforts.

He, Ramón, and I went up into Coal Pit Canyon and knelt beside the covered track of the lobo while Mr. Anderson's long, sensitive fingers daintily removed the log cabin of sticks that had preserved it. The print told the experienced hunter more than it had revealed to us.

'That is an old loafer,' he said with assurance, rising and fastidiously brushing the sand and leaves from his knees. 'Perhaps he is trap-wise.'

As always, when talking about a wolf, Mr. Anderson spoke softly. Now he looked up and down the trail cautiously, and I had a fleeting thought that the wolf might be hidden in the nearest manzanita thicket, listening to every word. Overhead were birds, and the hunter lowered his voice even more as he continued, lest the wolf say, 'A little bird told me.'

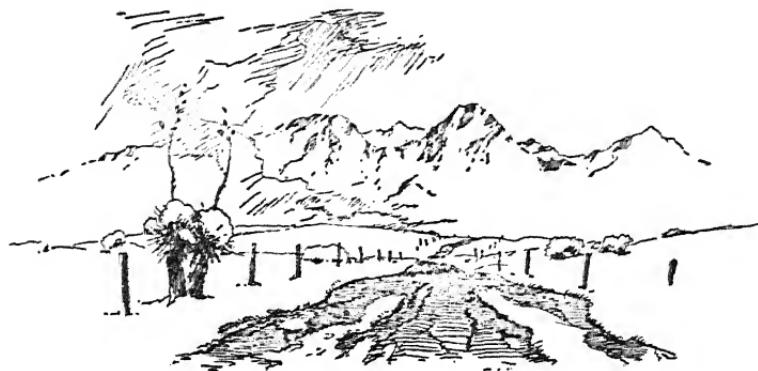
'This lobo's toe-nails leave only a faint mark at the end of his big toes because he has blunted them by rambling

across the country through the rocks like lightning, instead of sticking to the cow-trails like the average wolf. That makes it very hard to tell from what direction he came or where he is going.'

Mr. Anderson looked down at the lone track, chin in his lean hand, pondering.

'They tell about an old horse-wrangler,' I suggested, 'who had no difficulty in finding the horses, no matter how rough and brushy the country was in which they ran. When someone asked him how he managed it, he said, "I just ask myself where I would go if I were a horse. Then I go to that place — and there are the horses."'

'That's just the way I aim to do with this wolf!' chuckled Brother Anderson.



XXXVII. HELL'S HIP POCKET

LONG familiar with every ridge, canyon, and watering-place in the Chiricahuas, Mr. Anderson needed little time to decide where he would prowl of nights if he were a lobo, rambling through the woods in pursuit of beef, venison, or excitement. Between towering cliffs and along the floor of deep canyons were narrow passes which a wolf could hardly avoid if he were roving through these mountains. In these strategic spots the hunter set his traps. After covering the steel jaws with earth, he artfully obliterated every visible trace of his work, leaving it to the wind and hot sun to destroy the scent of human hands before nightfall. As the last and most important preparation for the reception of the wolf, the hunter poured out a little of his precious, secretly compounded bait, a potent lure which had tempted many a lobo to draw near a trap, stop, sniff, and scratch — just once too often.

The traps were so widely scattered over our range that it

was impossible to visit the whole line each day on foot. For mounts Mr. Anderson had the use of two small Mexican mules belonging to our neighbor, Aaron Cummings; skittish creatures with flashing heels and hostile eyes bulging beneath stiffly pointed ears. When these mules were not fastidiously picking their way over the rock-strewn trails, they were heehawing indignant protests to everyone who passed the Hermitage corrals where they spent their off hours. They seemed to consider themselves much abused, although they had hay and grain in abundance and a walnut tree for shade. Except for the daily round to inspect the traps and see that they were undisturbed, the hunter's part had been played and the next move must be made by the wolf.

Charlie Rak had been away from home while all this was going on, and we were almost out of grain when he drove in one evening after dark and backed up to the barn door to unload a truckful of cottonseed cake, bran, and rolled barley. Ramón and Maximo came from their house to unload the grain, and I hastened over to the barn, flashlight in hand.

‘What do you suppose happened to me today?’ Charlie burst out the moment I appeared. ‘A man tried to have me arrested!’

‘Arrested for what?’ I cried. The flashlight betrayed my state of mind by wobbling in my trembling hand, casting a dancing flicker around the dark corral.

‘He swore to a warrant for no reason at all! Just pure spite!’ Charlie sputtered. ‘I had told Santiago to take down a piece of fence and he got mixed up and started to take down an old, rickety, abandoned fence that belonged to another man. The fellow doesn't want me down there in the Valley, so he grabbed at the chance to make trouble for me and did his best to have me arrested for stealing a fence. That place down there is Hell's Hip Pocket!’

A reputation for honesty has a distinct, practical value in

this sparsely settled country of Arizona where everyone knows everybody else. The justice of the peace readily believed Charlie's explanation that the fence had been taken down by mistake and was already being rebuilt. The warrant was not even served. None the less it was a disturbing experience and a warning of the hostility that we might expect. We realized that we were sure to be unpopular with men who had for years been grazing their cattle free of expense upon the land which we were now leasing, but we had not dreamed that their resentment would be shown in this particular manner.

'I shall have to ask Mr. Heyne to lend me his transit,' said Charlie. (Luckily he had plenty of experience in land surveying while he was in the Forest Service.) 'I'll find an established section corner and run each line before I take down any more fences or build any. I can't trust to landmarks, and the fences of our neighbors down there are as crooked as a dog's hindleg. If I set a post a foot or so over on another man's land there'll be more hell a-popping. It's a good thing the fellow did try to have me arrested. Now I know what I'm up against and I'll give them no chance to hang anything on me.'

After a snack of cold cornbread and milk, which was all the larder afforded that night, Charlie Rak continued his tale of Hell's Hip Pocket. His exciting experience with law and order had wound up a week that had been maddening, in view of our great need to have our new land fenced and our cattle located upon it. Up here in the mountains our cattle were in urgent need of feed, while in the Valley the cattle of other men were fattening on the range that we had leased. The owners of these stray cattle had seen our fences going up and were trying to use our range to the utmost before we could enclose it.

For two weeks my husband had been trying his best to

make some sort of deal with an exasperating, unbusiness-like woman, who seemed incapable of deciding whether to lease her half-section of land to him, to someone else, or to no one at all. For years this land had lain unfenced, undesired; tenanted only by the stray cattle that grazed upon it. Now that Charlie Rak wished to lease it, several other men at once desired it also, and the dazzled owner played 'eeny, meeny, miny, mo' with all of them, hoping they would bid against one another. One day she accepted from Charlie a check for the first year's rent in advance, promising to sign the lease which he left with her. The next day she returned both lease and check, having changed her mind overnight. So long as there was any chance of securing this land, Charlie did not want to fence it outside of his pasture; and until he was surely in possession, he could not fence it inside.

In desperation, he offered to buy the land outright, and this move, instead of ending the agony, merely prolonged it. The owner wanted to find out if someone else would offer her a higher price before accepting this new offer. Finally Charlie induced this elusive lady to go with him to a lawyer, intending to have the deed drawn up, signed, sealed, and delivered all in one swoop while she was in the proper mood. It then developed, to the chagrin of all concerned, that she was not the actual owner of the land, although she had been paying the taxes for several years. The property was part of her dead father's estate which, because of her ignorance of legal matters, had never been probated. She could neither lease nor sell it. After all this delay we must now build a mile of fence between this land and ours, meanwhile seeing stray cattle by the bunches overrunning the range which we so sorely needed for our own cows.

On the two days that Charlie remained at home, we devoted every possible moment to the writing of letters to absentee owners of additional land that we wished to lease,

and to making out lease agreements for the signature of those owners who had answered our previous letters favorably. Then Charlie departed with a towering load of fence-posts, a roll of stay-wire, a keg of staples, and shovels and crowbars which he had sharpened at the forge while I pumped the bellows. He utterly declined to add the wolf to his other worries.

'Brother Anderson will catch that lobo,' said my husband positively. 'He has never failed yet.'

No sooner had he left than the telephone rang imperatively and I took down the receiver with much reluctance. This is not a year in which ranchers indulge in idle chit-chat over the party line and a ring is apt to mean some species of grief. Sure enough. At the other end of the line was our neighbor, Frank Krentz, in a high state of excitement, urgently inquiring for Hunter Anderson. Two of the Krentzes' valuable registered cows, heavy with calf, had been killed by a wolf that very morning when they came to drink at the tank. The place where they watered was in the open, level country, miles below the wooded mountains. Mr. Krentz had found the cows while they were still warm, showing that they had been attacked in daylight. Any wolf might have killed a single animal in order to satisfy his hunger, but this lobo had eaten very little of the first cow and had wantonly killed the second one without touching the meat. He was a 'killer' from sheer love of the chase, far more to be dreaded than an ordinary wolf because his depredations were out of all proportion to his appetite.

Word was sent to Mr. Anderson, and just as soon as he had made his daily round of the traps in Rucker, he started for the Spear E Ranch by automobile, seventy-five miles by the road around the foot of the Chiricahuas. At the Spear E he picked up Frank Krentz, and in the late afternoon they drove down the long gentle slope to the tank, the glare of the

westerling sun in their eyes. As they approached the watering-place they heard bawling and bellowing; saw a commotion among the cattle, and arrived just in time to find the brazen wolf in the very act of attacking a calf. He was snapping at it and pulling it down.

Hearing the motor, the lobo stood over the calf and looked calmly at the approaching car until it was almost upon him. Then he wheeled and loped away over the grassy plain. After the wolf sped the automobile at non-stop boulevard speed, driven by an eager, relentless hunter, who paid no heed to bumps, holes, and shallow washes, his eyes fixed upon the fleet, gray form ahead. They gained on the wolf. They were within shooting range when the lobo jumped into an arroyo, was lost to sight for an instant, then climbed the opposite bank. The car stopped and the men shot once—and missed.

There was no second chance, for the wolf had now reached the deep wash for which he had been heading, a narrow, rocky gash in the plain where no car could follow him. Into this he plunged and ran among the concealing boulders until he was well out of the range of a rifle. Then he emerged and stopped on a knoll to look back at the men who had vainly pursued him. Angry and frustrated, the men were forced to look on helplessly as the lobo leisurely ascended the rocky slopes and entered the sanctuary of the nearest rim-rock.

Around the watering-place where the wolf had killed the cows and attacked the calf (which later died), there were any number of tracks which corresponded with the lone print found on our own range. Away from the watering-tank the ground was hard and rocky. For all his searching Mr. Anderson was unable to find a trail which would show where the wolf had traveled when coming down to the plain. He had just 'fallen off the mountains,' and there was little use in setting traps because he might never again descend in the same place.

Within a few days the wolf again made a raid upon the Krentzes' cattle, maliciously choosing the registered, pure-bred cows as his victims instead of the less valuable 'grade-stuff.' This time he attacked his two helpless victims in the lower end of Tex Canyon, where the mountains meet the plain. Mr. Anderson hastened over to the Spear E range again and this time set out a few traps near the dead cows. He arranged for an experienced hunter to watch these traps for him, since it would have meant a ten-mile ride each way on his mule by way of the mountain trail, and that was too far from Rucker for him to visit the traps daily. On his way back from the Krentzes', Mr. Anderson stopped here—and, when I saw him plodding up the steps, soberly, wearily, I feared that he might be going to tell me that he had decided to take up the traps on our range and move over to the Spear E's. I asked him if that was what he intended doing.

'No, Mrs. Rak,' he replied thoughtfully. Then he sank down on the wooden bench before the house as though he felt too tired to go inside for the sake of a comfortable chair. 'Some folks might think that I ought to move over there, but I'm not going to do it.'

'I am awfully glad to hear that,' said I.

'This is the way I look at it,' he began.

There was a slight rustling sound by the honeysuckle vine, and Brother Anderson looked around suspiciously. Twirly, the gray ground-squirrel that lives in a hole under the house, was very near us, sitting up on its haunches, front paws hugged to its breast, head bent forward. Its eyes were full of eager curiosity and its ears were perked in a listening attitude.

Mr. Anderson instinctively lowered his voice so that the squirrel could not overhear our conversation and I was obliged to slide nearer to him on the bench to catch his confidential tones as he continued.

'You folks wrote to me that you had a wolf on your range ten days before it was reported by the Krentzes, and I know by the tracks that it is the same wolf. I have set out some traps in Tex Canyon, and I am going to have them watched and baited every day — but I shan't catch the lobo over there. I know where I should go if I were a wolf, and there I'll catch him.'

'Just because you like Rucker Canyon is no reason why the wolf should prefer it,' I remarked skeptically.

'Wait and see!' Brother Anderson murmured almost inaudibly. 'Wait and see!'

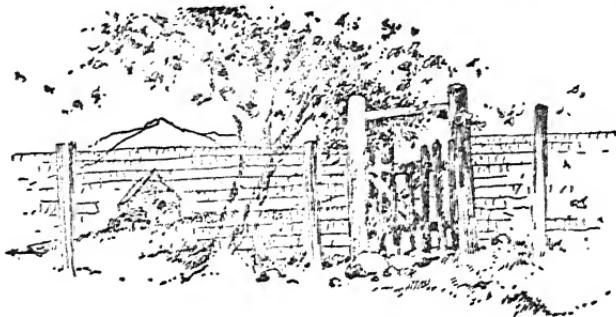
By now, even his breath was bated.

There was no longer any need of secrecy and silence when he drove up to our door with a flourish the very next morning, honking his horn, beaming and beckoning.

'Come on out and look at this, Mrs. Rak!' he cried with immense satisfaction.

Dramatically he lifted the lid of the storage compartment in the back of his roadster, and there lay the hide of a great gray lobo. We measured it, six and a half feet from tip to tip. The head was still intact, green eyes glaring balefully, yellowed fangs bared in a snarl. At the end of the roughened pads of the large feet were the blunted toe-nails that had made the killer's sign distinct from that of lesser wolves.

Lifting my eyes from the long gray hide and terrifying head, now lying in a heap at my feet, I looked up at the lofty mountains that surround Rucker Basin, regarded the fringe of pines on the crest of Monte Vista, outlined against the blue sky; Turtle Mountain; Sage Peak; unnamed lesser mountains by the score, humbly surrounding the giants. Somewhere, amid this welter of peaks, canyons, ridges, precipitous slopes, and wooded mesas, Hunter Anderson had buried a steel trap in a space that he could cover with his two hands — and the wolf had set his paw upon a trigger that I could cover with one of mine.



XXXVIII. SUMMER COMES

CHARLIE'S near arrest for taking down another man's fence proved to be a well-disguised blessing in that it made him cautious. With a transit, chain, and pins, and with a man with a pole and flag before and another behind, he began surveying the boundaries of each property that we bought or leased. Having thus made sure of our lines, he set his men to taking down another old fence — and immediately he was served with a warrant. That time he really wanted to have the case come up in court, knowing that the fence was well within the borders of land which we owned. However, the complainant withdrew the charge and solaced himself by piling several truckloads of old iron, tin cans, and other rubbish in the lane which we used to go and come from our property.

Santiago finished cutting and packing the posts which had kept him busy for weeks. He secured a good helper and went down to the Valley to build fences, at which work he is expert. Day after day Charlie Rak drove down to his new range with a load of fence-posts, fearing that each trip in his

old rickety truck might be its last. Twice he broke down on the road and had to be towed to a garage. Each night he looked wistfully at the pictures of new trucks in the advertising pages of the magazines, exasperated beyond measure by the thought that we could easily have had a truck for the price of the grain that the drought had forced us to buy.

'I'd like to have a little luck,' he said one night as he was winding the alarm clock before going to bed. 'Just enough to let me know there is such a thing.'

'You have had luck,' declared I, very Pollyanna. 'You are lucky that you broke your leg last year instead of this.'

Whereupon he set his alarm for four o'clock and fell into an uneasy, troubled sleep; twitching and groaning as his muscles relaxed from profound fatigue and strain.

Letters continued to come from landholders in Maine, Oregon, and the Everglades. Although we had asked merely for a lease on their property, some of these absentee owners offered to sell it to us outright, having abandoned all expectation of its ever becoming more valuable and being weary of paying taxes. Others, who still cherished a hope that the land might some day make them rich through the discovery of minerals or oil, were willing to lease it to us meanwhile, since our privileges extended only to the grass roots.

When a letter arrived, I sat down to the typewriter to make out a lease agreement, full of 'to wits' and 'parties of the first part.' I am undoubtedly the world's worst legal stenographer. With the gasoline lamp on the mantel back of me so that the light might shine on the paper, I began. So did my troubles. The printers of those blankety-blanks had spaced them so that they could not be filled in on a typewriter without a continual jiggling up and down. The description of the land was cryptic: 'SW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 20, T23S, R27E, G&SR, B&M, near Douglas, Arizona.' The latter phrase was manifestly thrown in as a kindly afterthought, so that I might have some idea where the land was AT.

I tried so hard to avoid becoming confused by all these points of the compass that I occasionally lost my way among the keys of the typewriter. Mistakes may not be erased on a legal document and the blanks cost a nickel apiece at the drugstore. I learned to watch my fingers.

At Old Camp Rucker the work went on, each day like the one before except for the varied mishaps which added their spice of cussedness. We now had fourteen dogie calves that either shared the milk of a foster-mother or had bottles of milk poured down their throats each night and morning. We poked their noses down into a shallow trough filled with rolled barley and cornmeal, so that they learned to eat. We drove them to water twice a day and saw that their low manger was always filled with hay. When they were sick, they had their eggs and coffee before I had my own. One of these dogies was the son of a crazy cow, La Loca, who had plenty of milk in her udder, but refused to stand still long enough to let the calf suck it.

Señora Arbol (Mrs. Tree) gained her name by wedging herself so firmly between two closely growing trees that one had to be chopped down to release her. She had to be doctored daily, together with our other chronic patients: the yearling that had been bitten by the wolf; the one who had a cactus thorn in her eye; and Peggy, who hurt her leg while trying to break into the apple orchard. Of them all, Peggy was the least seriously hurt and the most troublesome to cure. We expect range cows to fear and distrust man. As calves and yearlings they are brought into the corrals to be branded, ear-marked, weaned, and dehorned. As grown animals they associate the corrals with the bawling of their calves which are being branded and ear-marked in their turn. In spite of this, fear often makes them more docile than the milk cows who have been fed and pampered until they have no fear at all. To get Peggy into the chute, I had to walk through my-

self, backward, with a pan of cottonseed cake in my hand to lure her on. When I backed out through the chute gate, Ramón slammed it quickly before she could follow me and Tio Maximo thrust a bar behind her. When the doctoring was over, we let her have the cake so that we could serve her in the same way another time.

Despite the fact that nearly all of our emergencies were additional troubles, I think we almost welcomed them as a relief from the monotony of feeding and watering cattle and the passionate anxiety with which we watched the sky.

Two hopes sustained us, promising to end our unceasing labors. Eventually Charlie would have the Valley Pasture ready to receive our cattle, and, in time, it might possibly rain once more. Of the latter possibility we spoke little to one another when the first weeks of July went by without a shower to usher in the summer rainy season. We devoted our thoughts and energies to the immediate problems to dull the anguish of desire with which we awaited the rains. The clear, brilliant days of burning heat were the easiest to endure. They roused no hopes. They spared us the keenest torture of drought, the feeling of utter helplessness with which we saw clouds gather, mass upon darker mass, linked by flashes of sheet lightning and vocal with the reverberations of thunder. The pine trees stood motionless. Birds wheeled above them without a cry. There was a hush of expectancy throughout all nature that was of itself a prayer. Our very souls thirsted.

Then the quiet was suddenly broken by a rustling of the trees, and to our ardently uplifted eyes was disclosed a rift in the clouds. They parted, drifted away, dissolved into transparent vapor, disclosing the victorious glare of the pitiless sun.

We endured it by striving all the more valiantly to accomplish the work that was within human power.

It is a tradition among the cowmen of the Southwest that they must bear the inevitable with courage and outwardly

with cheerfulness. The man whose wells are growing dry says that he saw two wasps fighting over the last drop in his water-tank. 'My cows are doing fine,' declares another. 'They have learned to eat in threes. Two hold up a rock while the third gets the grass that grew under it.'

In mid-July there were showers all over this corner of Arizona. They were by no means the deluge for which we were longing, yet they served to bring up the sap in the trees and the oaks began to leaf out anew. Vigorous young sprouts appeared about the roots of the oaks that had been cut the previous summer. Apache plume was soon green in the canyons and mountain sacatone came to life on the higher slopes. We need worry no longer about the young cattle that had managed to struggle through the drought unaided. At the Home Ranch we continued to feed as before. The stronger animals among those we had fed were to be driven down to the Valley as soon as Charlie had the pasture ready for them. The weaker ones could not be turned out on the range until the rains had provided grass in abundance which they might find without climbing the high hills.

Best of all, showers had fallen on our new range in the Valley and green blades were appearing among the dry bunches of galleta grass. Feed would await our cattle there. One pasture had already been completely fenced and provided with a windmill, tank, and troughs. Along one side of a second pasture a drift fence would protect our cattle somewhat from the encroachments of the stray animals that formerly swarmed there. As soon as we received a few more leases for which we were waiting, this pasture could also be closed completely. It contained several sections of mesquite-covered land through which the creek flowed, and across it ran a mile-long green, grassy swale.

The day was finally set upon which the cattle would start on their forty-mile drive to the Valley.



XXXIX. A LADY OF LEISURE

TO THE old trail-herders who drove their cattle from the Mexican Border to Montana, our drive to the Valley would have seemed a holiday jaunt and our elaborate preparations a joke. Indeed, so soft have we become in this day and age, we would gladly have avoided the drive altogether by having our cattle trucked to the Valley by men who make a business of hauling cattle. We decided against this when we found out how much it would cost. It seemed better to save the money and apply it to the purchase of a truck in which we could do our own hauling in years to come.

Our cattle were thin. Many of them had calves, and ten miles a day was all that we could expect them to cover. They were to travel through a range country in which there was no feed along the trail. We had permission from Mr. Meadows of the OK, Bill Hunsaker, and Mr. Knight to use their large corrals in that succession for the three nights spent en route.

Bales of alfalfa could be left at each of these ranches for the cattle to eat after the day's drive. There was an abundance of water at each stopping-place.

On Saturday morning, Charlie went off with a staggering load of posts. On Monday he intended to make a trip with a similar load, leaving the baled hay at the ranches as he returned. Tuesday was to be devoted to trimming up the trail herd and on Wednesday the drive would start.

José Nuñez promised to come up from Elfrida to help with the drive. He had been offered a chance to look after the cattle when they were located in their new home, but he declined it hastily, that job being too steady and responsible for his volatile temperament. Too much cow and too little guitar. It was just as well, for Charlie learned that Roberto Flores was no longer employed in the dairy and easily persuaded him to work for us again. He and his family were to lodge in half of a large adobe house on a ranch belonging to Ralph Cowan, who lent us this shelter until we could provide a permanent one of our own. The other half of the house was still large enough for the bachelor cowboy who took care of the Cowan cattle, and he said he was glad to have company.

After Charlie had gone off with his posts on Saturday, I cleared the breakfast table and began washing the dishes, thinking as I did so how well everything was planned and how little chance there was of a hitch in our arrangements. A row of three large windows light the sink and drainboard, and through them I saw approaching me the woe-begone figure of Manuél Chavez. Her gait was that of a weary snail; her thin shoulders were bowed. Under the *rebózo*, the black headshawl which she invariably wears, was a bathtowel, held to her face so that only one eye peered at me tearfully. She crept into the kitchen and perched herself upon the very edge of a chair.

‘For Heaven's sake! What is the matter, Manuél?’

'Oh, Señora, what a pain I have!' she moaned. 'I have not slept. How I am suffering!'

She unwrapped the towel that swathed her face and disclosed a swollen cheek, twice the size of the other.

'*Una molár*' (a back tooth), '*muy mala*. I must go in to the dentist at once and have it pulled out.'

'No doubt you must,' I admitted, with slight sympathy in my tone. Manuélá had known that Charlie was going to Douglas and she could have gone in with him. Instead of that she had slyly waited until he was gone before showing her swollen visage.

'Send Ramón to me,' I said shortly. 'I shall have to let him take you to town.'

'*Gracias!*' chirped Manuélá, getting up nimbly and starting for the barn at a brisk pace very different from the one at which she had come here. I could see that she regarded a tooth as a small price to pay for a trip to town. Ramón was not so pleased. They own a limousine, a heavy, logy, seven-passenger car that must have been the pride and joy of a rich family ten or more years ago. It will bog down after a light dew. It drinks gas and oil like a toper, and suffers from an epidemic of punctures because Ramón cannot afford to buy the large tires which it wears out so speedily. Before they could start, he had to take off one tire and patch the tube because they had limped in on a flat the last time they came home. It was ten o'clock when they finally got away, the decrepit engine sputtering, the running-gear grating and squeaking for lack of grease. It would be a miracle if they returned before the next day, and all the work must be done by Tio Maximo and me.

At four in the afternoon we had watered and fed the cattle. Only the dogie calves, their foster-mothers, and the milk cows awaited us. Tio Maximo went to the hay barn and began forking hay into the manger for the cattle that were to be

kept up overnight. I put oil and gas in the Bang-chook and greased every hole and crevice. The make-and-break timer needed readjusting, and I fixed it as I had seen Charlie do on previous occasions. On my dress were souvenirs of my day's occupations: the yellow of cottonseed cake; pine-tar from doctoring; milk spilled by impatient, bottle-fed calves; mud splashed by cows fighting at the water-trough; oil and black grease from the engine that had spread from my hands to my face and hair. The Bang-chook started pumping again and I was listening to the timing when I heard a motor-car. It entered the water-lot and stopped a few feet from me. From it alighted a stranger, a thin, worn man, who came forward in a most ingratiating manner and introduced himself. He was a Phoenix man with whom Charlie had had a few business dealings through correspondence. These affairs were by no means important enough to warrant his coming way over here to attend to them in person.

'Come and meet my wife, Mrs. Rak,' he requested, beaming, bowing, apparently thinking that he was offering me a great treat.

I went over to the car and bowed my grease-smeared head to a vision of loveliness, a tall, blonde, languid woman in pale blue, white-hatted, white-gloved.

'My wife, Mrs. Mellott,' crowed the proud husband. 'I thought a few days' trip to the mountains would do her so much good.'

Only then I realized that these people had invited themselves to visit us. Possibly the streaks of grime hid my consternation. I told them to drive over to the house, and walked after the car with my mind revolving around the difficulty of presenting any appearance of hospitality. For weeks we had forgotten that there was such a thing as leisure in the world, or pleasure other than that we could snatch from some casual jest. We spoke when work made it neces-

sary; ate in order to have strength to work harder; slept because we must if we were to work again on the morrow.

The living-room was presentable, and I left our guests seated there while I retired to wash my face and hands and attend to the spare bedroom. In order to keep the rest of the house straight with the least amount of trouble, I had fallen into the habit of dumping into the guest-room everything that was in the way elsewhere. Unread magazines littered the desk. On the bed were clothes that needed mending and garments that should be put away. Robles had been taking his afternoon naps on the rugs, judging from the wisps of long black hair all over them. Spiders had been spinning webs in the corners, and the flies that escaped the spiders had specked the windows and mirror. The bed, thank goodness, had been made up with fresh linen and needed only a clean spread.

From the storeroom I fetched two big pasteboard cartons, into which I hurled everything that did not belong in the guest-room, carried the cartons into our own room, and thrust them under the bed. I took the rugs out-of-doors and gave them a furtive flap, hoping the visitors would not hear me. With an agility worthy of a tennis champion, I swiped at cobwebs, dusted chair-rungs, wiped off windows, and ran the dust-mop around the floor. Water in the pitcher. An unwrapped cake of perfumed, Christmas soap, hitherto regarded as too fancy for use.

I took the Mellotts to their room; he with a heavy suitcase in each hand and an overnight bag tucked under his arm; she carrying her white hat and gloves.

‘It has been such a hot day for driving, perhaps you would like baths now?’ I suggested.

They would. Good! That would occupy them for an hour that I could use very well in my dozen varieties of business. I lavished towels, soap, and powder upon the bathroom.

‘Oh, my! The Bang-chook!’

Had Tio Maximo thought of changing the stream of water from the troughs to the supply-tank? I went over on the run and found the tank running-over full. I stopped the engine and jog-trotted back to the house. I must kindle a fire in the big wood-burning range so that it would be hot when the time came to start cooking dinner.

‘Oh, why, out of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, did Manuélá choose this particular one for her toothache?’ I thought, while raking down ashes. ‘For once, she might have been willing to wash dishes or sweep a floor for me. At least, she need not have taken Ramón away so that I must add his work to my own. Will Charlie Rak get back in time with the meat — or do I have to give these people bacon and eggs for dinner?’

Tio Maximo had been getting the last of the cattle together so that we could finish feeding. I ran back to the corral. With bawling, mooing, kicking, and cavorting, the dogies and their mothers came together. Tio had already milked. We filled the bottles, seized a dogie apiece, and held it between our knees while the milk gurgled down. The five-bottle baby was cheated a little so that there might be cream for our cereal and coffee in the morning. We had been giving the calves nearly all of the milk. For a long time I had made no butter. I must remember to warn Charlie not to ask for butter at breakfast — because there was none.

From the house to the corral now sauntered the Mellotts, hand in hand, freshly bathed and resplendently clad. Hungry, too, quite likely, and altogether unused to a life in which cows and calves take precedence at dinner.

An irate bellowing sounded from the water-lot. There was the young bull that had failed to come in earlier when the cattle were being fed and was now clamoring for his ration. Maximo let him in for the sake of peace and I went to the

barn to fetch the measure of cottonseed cake. I had poured it into the feeding-trough when the bull suddenly snorted and came for me. I had no time to be scared.

'Who the devil do you think you are?' I shouted and smashed the empty feed-bucket down on his head.

He backed off and fell to eating as though nothing at all had happened, but Mrs. Mellott had not waited to see. With a shriek of terror, she grasped her husband's arm and fled for the shelter of the house, white shoes flying among pink organdie ruffles.

'I wish I'd thought to ask her to put a stick of wood in the stove,' thought I.

Leaving the guests to entertain themselves, I managed to wash off the accumulated stains of the day and put on fresh clothes. Then I tackled the dinner, of which bacon and eggs might be the main dish. Scalloped potatoes, which stand keeping warm if a meal is delayed; beets, out of a can, and hot crumb cake. By good fortune there were loaves of bread which I had baked in the morning. Mrs. Mellott came out to offer her help, which I declined because she did not know where dishes, silver, and linen were kept, and could not even set the table.

Charlie's truck clattered up to the door at last, and I ran out with a flashlight. The first glimpse of his face told me that something had gone wrong.

'What has happened now?' I quavered.

'Hell's a-popping down in the Valley!'

He caught sight of the strange automobile in the yard.

'Whose car is that?'

'Your friend Mr. Mellott from Phoenix has arrived.'

'He's no friend of mine. I never saw the man. What did he come for?'

'Because he thought the trip would be good for his wife.'

Charlie groaned.

'Never mind them,' I insisted. 'Tell me what is wrong in the Valley.'

'A man who has a ranch about ten miles from there drove down a big bunch of cattle and turned them loose today on the part of our land that isn't fenced. They'll eat it clean before we can get our fence built.'

Before he could say more about this new piece of misfortune, Mr. Mellott joined us, very jovial and hearty, insisting that Charlie should go inside at once and 'meet the wife.'

I have never known whether the guest or the hostess should first suggest going to bed. I was spared any indecision by the gasoline lamp. I had forgotten to fill it, and it mercifully went out, allowing us to go to bed not very much later than our usual hour. Things looked brighter to us in the morning, and Charlie felt ready to cope with the situation in the Valley. Three letters had just arrived, promising us the additional land that we needed immediately. Now he must hire a man with a big truck and trailer to haul as many posts in one trip as he himself could haul in five. Santiago and his helper could be given a crew of Mexicans to dig post-holes for them. It was still possible to enclose our pasture before the cattle of other men had eaten all the feed in it. He rose with renewed courage and kindled the fire while I dressed.

'I'm going over to the barn to see if Ramón has got back yet,' I said as he came back to dress. 'If he hasn't, I shall have to help Tio Maximo with the morning chores and you can get breakfast.'

He agreed without expressing any surprise. We have always been used to exchanging jobs inside and outside, and since he had not been helping with the feeding, it would be much better for me to do it.

'What lovely biscuits!' exclaimed Mrs. Mellott, when we were at breakfast.

'I made them while my wife fed the cattle,' responded Charlie.

Her blue eyes widened with amazement.

'I'd so much rather work in the corral than in the kitchen,' I explained placidly.

I could see that she did not know whether to believe me or to conclude that I was the most down-troddenest and put-upon woman she had ever encountered. A gleam came into her eye that hinted of a desire to emancipate me, to set my feet on the right path — leading to a life of luxury and ease. First she must rouse in me the spirit to break the chains, or the riata, that bound me to the corral.

'I should think you would find it so hard to cook on a wood-stove,' she began commiseratingly, as she enveloped herself in my largest kitchen apron and helped me by wiping the breakfast dishes. 'I have an electric range — and a cook.'

'We have no electricity,' I replied.

'Oh!' That was hard to get over. She wiped the cups.

'I must remember to fill the gasoline lamp that went out last night,' I remarked, 'and the coal-oil ones too.'

'What a nuisance!' she cried indignantly. 'If you simply must live on a ranch and go into barns and places like that, you should have every convenience in the house. I don't see how you stand it!'

I made no comment.

'I have an electric refrigerator,' she continued; 'the little ice cubes are so cute! I have an electric washing-machine — and a woman who comes to work it on Mondays. I should think you would want electricity more than anything else in the world!'

'That's because you don't know me,' said I, laughing. 'More than anything else in the world, I want an inch of rain.'

After tidying her own room, Mrs. Mellott sat down with a magazine, declining to leave the house out of regard for her white shoes. Her husband went over to the blacksmith's shop with Charlie and was soon put to work at the bellows,

while Charlie beat iron into hinges for the gates of the new pasture.

‘Mrs. Mellott is sitting out on the terrace all alone,’ said Charlie when he came into the hot kitchen at noon time.

‘I can’t help it. I’m cooking the dinner,’ I answered, bending over to look in the oven.

‘You remind me of the old vaudeville joke,’ said he. “Is your wife entertaining this summer?” “No, not very.”

It does not take much to make us laugh.

‘How long do the Mellotts intend to stay?’ he asked.

‘I haven’t the least idea.’

‘Well, I’m going to town tomorrow to get more Mexicans to work on the fence and a man to haul posts, company or no company.’

‘And on Monday I’ve got to check up on the things that have to go in the chuck-wagon,’ said I. ‘Tuesday I’ll be too busy cooking.’

Ramón and Manuéla got back at noon. Two punctures, a loose ignition wire, and a plugged gas line had been a sample of his troubles on the round trip to Douglas.

‘You had better take the car off the wheels and make a chicken-coop of it,’ I suggested.

‘You are right, Señora!’ agreed Ramón. ‘I shall stop driving this big house on wheels and buy a smaller car.’

I was delighted. While he was paying for a second-hand car on the installment plan he would not be thinking of quitting his job, even if Manuéla took to weeping again.

As our sole contribution to the entertainment of our visitors, we took them for a little drive up the canyon in the late afternoon. Even then we were practical, taking some salt in the back of the car to leave at the troughs.

‘I had expected to find it lovely and green in the mountains,’ commented Mrs. Mellott, as we drove through the dusty floor of the canyon, ‘and it looks so bare and brown.’

'We have been having a drought,' I explained. 'It isn't really over yet.'

'Oh!' she exclaimed. 'Is that the reason why it isn't green here?'

Drought was but a word to her. Something one read about in the papers that was happening in the Middle West. So, to us, flood has become a word. Something we read about in the papers that is happening in China.

Not until breakfast was over on Monday did Mr. Mellott say that they were leaving, intending to spend a day or so on a ranch near Globe.

'It will do my wife so much good,' he said again.

I wondered what good she had derived from her visit here. At least, she wished it to be of benefit to me. They were seated in their car and the men were exchanging a last word about business.

'I feel so sorry for the men, Mrs. Rak!' she cooed. 'Don't you feel sorry for them too?'

'Why — no!' I exclaimed, in some bewilderment. 'Not for men as a whole. Why should I feel sorry for them?'

'Because they have so much harder time than the women,' she explained significantly. 'Men are always working so hard, trying to make money, and worrying about business. While I never, never worry — as long as I have everything that I want.'

She smiled at us, waved her white-gloved hand, and they drove away.



XL. THE DRIVE

WHENEVER Charlie sees me ironing, polishing, dressmaking, and packing in preparation for a trip to Douglas to be gone a single night, he says, 'Lots of women go to Europe with less fuss than that.'

When I read over the list of things that he wanted loaded into the chuck-wagon, I told him that they would serve for a trail-herd drive to Wyoming. There was no room in the house for this mountain of goods and chattels, so I ran the car out of the garage and used that shelter for the packing. Everything must be assembled there, ready to be checked off from the list when Santiago arrived from the Valley and loaded up his *truckicito* on Wednesday morning. Besides being able to drive his car, Santiago is gifted as a camp cook, and at each stopping-place he was sure to be ready with a hot meal when the other men arrived on horseback.

Charlie, Ramón, José, and Tio Maximo were to drive the cattle. Their bedrolls, thick with quilts and blankets and covered with a roped, waterproof canvas tarp, were to be

taken on the chuck-wagon, together with that of Santiago. Each man had a change of clothes in his war-bag, rolled up in his bed, and a slicker to tie behind his saddle.

For the horses a hundred-pound sack of rolled barley and *morráls* (nosebags) were provided. For the camp-fire, an axe, shovel, and a supply of wood, since they were to travel through an open country where there was no fuel near the road of travel.

I do not see how we ever managed to get along before there were any pasteboard cartons. Into a large one, which I labeled in Spanish, went the white enameled plates and cups, the knives, forks, and spoons. There was a big butcher knife for carving the meat, a long-handled fork, two very long iron spoons, and a coffee-pot. Into another box I packed many pieces of clean cloth, torn from a worn sheet, to serve as dish-towels that need not be brought home for me to wash. With a wash-basin and soap went some Turkish towels that were wearing thin in the middle. Something told me that I would never care to see these towels again.

There was a shallow, round prospector's gold-pan, to be used for mixing *tortillas*, and a piece of heavy sheet-iron on which to cook them; a dishpan, two large Dutch ovens, a water-bucket. Flour, potatoes, onions, and beans were in sacks; sugar, coffee, matches, and baking-powder in labeled tins; a slab of bacon and a big can of 'lick' (syrup).

All these things were placed in the garage on Monday. On Tuesday I baked several loaves of bread in order to have the oven free for the tremendous roast of beef that must be cooked on Wednesday morning. Whenever I could spare a moment, I dashed over to the corrals to which the men were bringing the cattle as they rounded up all of the holding pastures here at the Home Ranch. Then began the trimming of the trail herd until it included only those animals that Charlie judged were in condition to stand the four-day drive

without being much the worse for it. As far as possible Charlie was taking to the Valley the cattle which he intended to sell in the fall, in order that he might have them near the railroad when shipping time came.

When the last cow had been cut from the trail herd, the gates of the corrals were closed and the chains or hooks which usually suffice for fastening them were reinforced by ropes. We wanted to be perfectly sure that the cattle would all be there in the morning. In a corral to which the cattle had access was a long watering-trough. Tio Maximo and José filled the mangers with hay as fast as they were emptied so that all the cattle might have time to eat their fill without crowding or fighting. We wanted them to start off in the morning with the willingness born of a good night's sleep and a full paunch.

The men had saddled and were ready to start in the morning when Charlie came over to the garage where Santiago was loading his car and I was checking the articles on the list for the last time.

'I've decided to run down the canyon in the car,' said Charlie, 'and open the gates between here and Mr. Heyne's place, so there will be no delay and trouble when we are driving the cattle.'

As he drove off, Ramón rode up on Tomás, the fat, grain-fed Spanish mule that he had chosen to ride because Tomás is easy-gaited and wise about cattle.

'I am going up into the pasture to see what calf is bawling there,' he told me. 'Possibly it is cut off from its mother. I'll be right back.'

He was right back — afoot — leading the mule from whose ankle a thin stream of red blood was steadily trickling.

'Tomás stepped into a hole and cut himself on a sharp rock!' cried Ramón, greatly concerned. 'I am afraid he is badly hurt!'

'He'll bleed to death if we don't stop the flow!' shouted

Charlie, who providentially drove up at that moment. 'Run, Mary, and get some cobwebs!'

No time for book-larnin' now. He was going to try one of the time-tested ranch remedies of Texas.

There were plenty of cobwebs in a dark corner of the store-room ceiling. I swept them down with a broom — dust, dead flies, live spiders and all — and fetched them to Charlie. He was kneeling on the living-room hearth, reaching up the chimney for a handful of the heavy soot that clings there. Already he had made a tourniquet with a 'pigging-string' and a stick. Now he wrapped the cobwebs about the wound, plastered that unique bandage with soot, and released the tourniquet. Blood trickled forth more and more sluggishly. Another layer of soot and cobwebs was added, and at last the blood ceased to ooze from the wound. Around the cobweb-swathed ankle, Charlie now wrapped a bandage of surgically clean gauze. (It did not seem ludicrous to us at the time), and this was heavily coated with pine-tar. It now seemed unlikely that the wound would require further attention before the men came home again.

We were all so concerned about Tomás that no one had thought of sending out to the pasture to get another mount for Ramón. By the time the mule was out of danger and a horse had been fetched in and saddled, a precious morning hour had been lost.

The moment now came toward which Charlie's energies had been directed for weeks. The gate leading to the range was opened and he rode through it slowly, the adventurous lead cattle following him, looking eagerly this way and that, glad to be free of the pastures and corrals in which they had been so long confined. Behind these the bulk of the herd followed closely, flanked on either side by Ramón and José. Tio Maximo rode in the rear, the place that is usually my own, keeping the slow-moving cattle, the 'drag,' in motion.

While I, for once afoot, closed the home gates forever behind the lowing cattle that were leaving the mountains in which they had been born.

Since we had all breakfasted by lamplight and had been working ever since, it was arranged for Santiago to meet the herd in Mr. Heyne's pasture. There the cattle could water at the river and lie in the shade while the men ate lunch, each taking his turn on guard to keep the cattle from straying.

From the oven I took the huge rib-roast of beef, thickened the gravy and put it in a lard pail, leaving the roast in the covered pan in which it had been cooked. In my largest iron pot were *frijoles* that had been simmering for hours with tomatoes, onions, and *chili*. This kettle and the roast we packed in a box half-full of excelsior and threw over it some gunnysacks so the food would keep hot. I hastily made two big panfuls of baking-powder biscuits for the lunch, although Manuélá always says, 'Ramón does not like the biss-kitties.'

I telephoned to Mr. Heyne, telling him that the men were planning to eat lunch in the sycamore grove near his house and would like to have him join them. As he lives all alone and rarely sees a chuck-wagon, he said he would enjoy having a real cowboy meal again.

Santiago drove away in ample time to make the coffee and set out the food before the men arrived, and when he had gone, it suddenly occurred to me that there was no reason why I should not drive down the canyon and have lunch with them too. I was all ready to leave home when I realized with amusement that unless I followed the men I should go hungry. I had not kept a bit of cooked food in the house for my own dinner — no meat, no bread, not so much as a single bean. There would be nothing for the dogs either unless they went along.

Rustic Negrito had never before been invited to enter an automobile and I had to boost him into the back seat, where

at first he sat trembling, not sure whether he should feel happy or miserable in such an unusual situation. Soon he lost his fear and was sitting up and looking through the window with the calm, disdainful air that he seemed to think suitable for dogs who ride in automobiles.

Robles, who has been riding all his life, leaped into the seat beside me with great enthusiasm, gave me one big lick with his red tongue to thank me for the pleasure of the ride, and sat with his head thrust through the window, slobbering and whimpering each time he saw a rabbit hopping beside the road or a squirrel climbing a tree.

We all ate ravenously. To me was added the luxury of indolence as I leaned back against a tree after the meal and watched Santiago clear up the picnic ground, put away the food, and retire to the bank of the river with a dishpan full of soapy water and soiled plates. To add to our ease and pleasure, clouds had stolen between us and the glaring sun, and distant thunder rumbled its promise of swift showers.

The riders mounted and rode around the cattle, gently rousing those that had lain down under the trees. Charlie took the lead as before, and, as the cattle were driven through the lower gate of the pasture, he made his tally, standing in his stirrups, his hand 'sawing the air,' his lips silently moving as he counted. Once beyond this gate, the cattle were in a country that they did not know. They grew uneasy and milled about in the glade, bawling incessantly until they were reunited with their calves from which they had become separated while coming through the gate. The cattle instinctively turned their faces back toward the mountains, restless, eager to go home once more.

When the last cow had been counted and Tio Maximo followed her through the gate, I closed it and leaned on the bars to see the herd strung out in marching order, riders on each flank. The men waved their farewells to me as the long

line of cattle wound across the glade and entered a grove of wild walnut trees that hid them from my view. I stood there, listening, until the plaintive lowing of the cattle grew too faint for my ear.

THE END

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